



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	11/05 Young activists, protesters rally at Cop26
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/05/world/europe/cop-protests.html
GIST	<p>GLASGOW — Thousands of climate activists from across the world have descended this week on the Scottish city of Glasgow, demanding that nations gathering for a global climate conference produce real, meaningful change.</p> <p>And some of the strongest and most urgent calls for action have come from young protesters who claim that the world they are inheriting is teetering on the brink of a climate catastrophe.</p>

They have spent the week [disrupting talks held by gas giants](#), and staging theatrical spectacles on the fringes of the international event, [known as COP26](#). But the protests will peak on Friday and Saturday in two days of demonstrations expected to draw up to 100,000 people.

On Friday afternoon, crowds streamed in to a leafy public park in central Glasgow for one of the centerpieces of the protest plans. Some protesters were carrying banners reading, “We are running out of time,” “26 years of blah, blah, blah,” and “System change not climate change.”

The youth-led climate strike was organized by Fridays for Future, the international movement that has grown out of Greta Thunberg’s solo school strike that began in 2018. But local unions and other campaigns also gathered in solidarity.

Veteran Extinction Rebellion climate activists stood alongside families with young children, union representatives, socialist campaigners and young students skipping school to demand greater action from world leaders to address the issue.

“There’s a real responsibility for young people that this will be ours to deal with,” said Eilidh Robb, 26, a Scottish climate activist. “And the mess that we didn’t create will be left to us to manage.”

Ms. Robb, who is originally from Edinburgh but is now based in Brussels, volunteers with the U.K. Youth Climate Coalition, a British nonprofit that mobilizes young people to take action on climate change. She [traveled to Glasgow this week by train with hundreds of others](#) to take part in the conference and in the protests.

While world leaders this week [managed to secure new agreements to end deforestation and reduce methane emissions](#), raising hopes of real progress, the coming days will see diplomats haggle over further greenhouse gas reductions.

But within the conference, countries are still debating about how they can deliver on the unmet promises of years past, including a pledge of \$100 billion in annual climate finance from 2020 to 2025. The commitment from wealthy nations to poorer nations was promised in 2009 and remains unfulfilled.

Countries that are most at risk from the effects of climate change in the developing world are also pushing major carbon-emitting nations to increase their annual targets to keep global temperatures from rising past 1.5 degrees Celsius, or 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit, compared with levels before the Industrial Revolution.

For many of the young protesters, the conference has produced mixed emotions: They expressed some concern that their voices were not being heard, but also some hope that their activism and presence at the event would help inspire change.

“It’s a huge burden for young people to dedicate their lives to calling out politicians who are paid to represent us,” Ms. Robb said.

The young activists say they want more than just reduced emissions: They would also like an acknowledgment of the systemic issues intertwined with climate change response, including inequality and poverty. They want solutions that work for everyone and that help dismantle racism, sexism and the neglect of developing nations.

Alejandra Kopaitic, 33, a Chilean master’s student studying the environment and climate change at the University of Manchester, in England, came to Glasgow with her husband to participate in the march. She wants governments and corporations to make more immediate commitments to finding solutions.

“We can do a lot from home, but it’s not enough: We need a whole system change,” she said. “If we don’t change business as usual and how we are producing things, taking resources from the ground and overconsuming, it is going to be difficult.”

Philip Klein, 10, was out of his Glasgow school on Friday to attend the march with his father and a schoolmate.

“I want a good future,” Philip said. “Hopefully we can fix it.”

Laura Kelly, 16, a student from Edinburgh, was blunt: “This is the moment; there is no better moment than now,” she said as she pointed to her banner, which read, “Action now or swim later.”

“Time’s important,” she added, “and we are running out of it.”

Rudy Sinclair, 16, was also missing school in Glasgow, but said that his school encouraged the school strike.

“We feel that the more people that come here the better the chance that the government will take notice and feel the pressure to do something,” he said.

The presence of environmental activists at COP26 itself has been muted because of pandemic restrictions, as well as difficulty in obtaining vaccines, visas and affordable accommodations, leaving some unable to attend.

The Britain-based COP Coalition, an umbrella group of climate activists and organizations, has labeled the conference the “least accessible climate summit ever,” pointing to chaotic crowding and some delegates being told to dial into the meeting from hotel rooms.

The format of the event — which was flipped from previous years to begin with speeches from international leaders, including President Biden — also left many activists barred from entering the conference center this week because of heightened security.

Monicah Kamandau, 27, a Kenyan climate activist who traveled to Glasgow, has long called for the world’s richest countries that are the most responsible for climate change to pay their share of addressing the problem, and for greater inclusivity of youth voices in debates and solutions.

She is hoping to see the \$100 billion climate finance commitment become a reality, with clear directions for mitigation and adaptation, and mechanisms put in place for countries to be held accountable to their commitments.

“I want to be very realistic and look at the fact that this is the 26th summit on climate discussions,” Ms. Kamandau said. “And my view is that over that time, there have been a lot of promises made, but they have not been implemented.”

In particular, women and activists from developing nations — who are among those most affected by extreme weather driven by climate change — are being left out of the most crucial conversations around climate change, many activists say.

In a survey of people in Brazil, India, South Africa and Vietnam, which all face imminent threats from climate change, ActionAid International, a charity group, found that nearly half of respondents think that developing countries are being excluded from representation at the climate talks. And three-quarters think that people from these regions will be most affected by the decisions made at the summit.

Diaka Salena Koroma, a climate activist from Sierra Leone, was unable to attend because her visa was delayed, despite having been invited to participate.

She began campaigning for climate justice [in 2017 after a mudslide set off by torrential rain killed hundreds in Freetown, her country’s capital](#), and said women and girls on the frontline of the climate crisis like her need to have more visibility.

	<p>“We are born in a system where our voices — our existence — doesn’t even matter,” she said of young people from developing countries.</p> <p>Ms. Koroma, who spoke by video chat from her home, said she wanted to see climate funds be distributed directly to those already most affected by climate change and broader commitments from wealthy nations to help mitigate the issue. She also hopes the conference will one day be held in Africa to bring more voices from the continent to the table.</p> <p>“We can’t play politics with this kind of issue,” she said. “Climate change — it surpasses every other issue we have.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/05 India fear: Diwali festival infections
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/05/world/covid-delta-variant-vaccine#india-diwali-covid
GIST	<p>When a devastating second wave of coronavirus infections hit India in the spring, hospitals were overwhelmed with sick patients and crematories struggled to bury the dead as the bodies piled up.</p> <p>Now India is celebrating one its most important holidays — Diwali, the festival of lights — and many fear another wave of infections as millions gather for the celebrations.</p> <p>“We let our guard down on this Diwali,” said Dr. Thekkekara Jacob John, a former head of clinical virology at Christian Medical College in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. “Despite government and health experts’ warnings, people think the virus is gone — it is not.”</p> <p>The holiday began on Thursday, and there is no data yet on what impact the festivities might be having on the country’s battle to curb the spread of the virus. But epidemiologists said that they already had concerns.</p> <p>People have been thronging markets with little social distancing, and hundreds of thousands traveled around the country this week to celebrate the holiday with their family members.</p> <p>“For this Diwali, people almost forgot the virus is still here and killing people,” said Dr. Prakash Singh, a virologist in New Delhi, India’s capital.</p> <p>Last year’s festival was observed without the usual fanfare of group prayers and fireworks. Then, the authorities deployed police officers in residential areas to restrict large gatherings. Hundreds of people in New Delhi were fined for breaching coronavirus restrictions.</p> <p>Before this year’s gatherings, health officials in India had already been warning of a possible third wave of infections, even though the second wave has at best only leveled off. A relaxed attitude — combined with the holiday festivities — could hamper the country’s fight against the virus, they said.</p> <p>During the second wave in the spring, the country experienced one of the world’s worst coronavirus surges, reaching a tragic peak in early May of more than 400,000 cases reported per day, with 4,500 daily deaths.</p> <p>But as vaccinations picked up after a slow and chaotic initial rollout, India saw cases plummet. More than three out of four adults have now received at least one vaccine shot, according to government data. And Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government recently lifted an eight-month ban on vaccine exports.</p> <p>More than 680,000 people flew from airports across the country on Monday in the lead-up to the festival, government officials said.</p>

	<p>The surge in travel was an apparent sign of confidence in the country's inoculation campaign, with 54 percent of the population having received at least one shot and 25 percent having been fully inoculated, according to the Our World in Data project at the University of Oxford.</p> <p>During a strict lockdown from late March to late May last year, most of India's Covid-19 cases were concentrated in urban areas. But as restrictions on interstate travel were eased, many people started moving from the cities to rural areas, bringing the virus with them. That is what experts fear might happen this time.</p> <p>On Friday, a throat-burning cloud settled over New Delhi, swallowing national monuments, as the air quality deteriorated to the "severe" category a day after Diwali. Despite a government ban, people had celebrated the holiday by setting off fireworks.</p> <p>Amit Tandon, a businessman in the northern Indian city of Chandigarh whose wife died during the second wave of infections in April, said that he was pained by the scenes of people celebrating the holiday while ignoring health restrictions.</p> <p>"When I saw people mixing together without masks and bursting firecrackers, my blood boiled," he said. "Only those who lost their loved ones know how this disease can destroy families and lives."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/05 Pfizer: antiviral pill highly effective
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/05/world/covid-delta-variant-vaccine#pfizer-says-its-antiviral-pill-can-vastly-reduce-hospitalizations-and-death
GIST	<p>Pfizer announced on Friday that its pill to treat Covid-19 had been found in a key clinical trial to be highly effective at preventing severe illness among at-risk people who received the drug soon after they exhibited symptoms.</p> <p>The antiviral pill is the second of its kind to demonstrate efficacy against Covid. It appears to be more effective than a similar offering from Merck, which is awaiting federal authorization.</p> <p>Pfizer's pill, which will be sold under the brand name Paxlovid, cut the risk of hospitalization or death by 89 percent when given within three days of the start of symptoms.</p> <p>Pfizer said an independent board of experts monitoring its clinical trial had recommended that the study be stopped early because the drug's benefit to patients had proved so convincing. The company said that it planned to submit the data as soon as possible to the Food and Drug Administration to seek authorization for the pill to be used in the United States.</p> <p>"The results are really beyond our wildest dreams," said Annaliesa Anderson, a Pfizer executive who led the drug's development. She expressed hope that Paxlovid "can have a big impact on helping all our lives go back to normal again and seeing the end of the pandemic."</p> <p>The treatment could become available in the next few months, though supplies are likely to be limited at first. The Pfizer and Merck pills are both geared toward patients regarded as high-risk, such as those above the age of 60 or with conditions like obesity that make them more susceptible to severe consequences from Covid.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/03 Don't forget to turn clocks back Sunday
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/why-we-need-to-set-clocks-back-sunday-even-though-washington-voted-to-ditch-the-switch-in-2019/
GIST	Washington state Rep. Marcus Riccelli isn't quite ready to give up on the popular bipartisan movement to adopt permanent daylight saving time and do away with the biannual clock switch.

But we still have to set our clock back one hour on Sunday, Nov. 7.

Two years ago, Washington legislators voted to adopt permanent daylight saving time. Similar pieces of legislation were sweeping through the U.S. with 16 other states, including California, Idaho and Oregon passing similar laws, resolutions or voter initiatives. The premier of British Columbia vowed to join the West Coast if Congress approved the change.

Changes seemed imminent then, but Congress has not acted on the [Sunshine Protection Act](#), sponsored by U.S. Sen. Patty Murray of Washington and Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida, that would amend the Uniform Time Act of 1966 and allow states to adopt permanent daylight saving time. While states can move to permanent standard time without federal approval, congressional action is required to stay on daylight saving time.

Granted, a lot has happened in the last two years, Riccelli said this week, but that shouldn't mean the end of the popular proposal.

"People have decided they want this and they are tired of seeing Congress as a broken clock," he said. "Congress needs wins, things that everybody can get behind and they need to take a stronger look at this."

A poll by The Associated Press [and NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#) showed that 71% of Americans don't want to keep moving the clock in spring and fall, though they are divided on whether they prefer standard or daylight saving time.

In areas of the country at lower latitude, the difference is not so stark, but it's keenly felt in the Seattle area. [On Seattle's shortest winter day](#), the sun rises at about 8 a.m. and sets around 4:20 p.m. If we were to adopt permanent daylight time in the winter, as proposed, the sun would rise at about 9 a.m. and set around 5:20 p.m.

Steve Calandrillo, a professor at the University of Washington School of Law who has testified before legislators and written extensively on the benefits of year-round daylight time, has said that numerous studies show permanent daylight time has distinct advantages.

Proponents of the measure say it would save hundreds of lives each year because darkness in the late afternoon and evening — when most people are awake and moving around — is more dangerous than the dark of morning, when a significant portion of the population is asleep.

It could lead to an estimated 20% reduction in crime because, Calandrillo says, it removes one hour from the "preferred workday" of criminals, who like to act in darkness and "are notoriously late risers." Among the most common opposition comes from people with concerns about children standing at bus stops in the dark.

However, local experts in depression and sleep science say there are more significant reasons to either embrace the twice-yearly clock change or to adopt permanent standard time instead of daylight saving time.

Both options are more in line with our natural circadian rhythms, which are synced with morning light and are critical for well being, Dr. David Avery, a professor emeritus in the UW School of Medicine's Department of Psychiatry and an expert in seasonal affective disorder (SAD) has said.

Moving our clocks forward into "daylight time," essentially losing an hour of morning light and tacking it onto the evening, is [devastating for people with seasonal depression](#), he said.

"I think people are so focused on the idea of having more light in the evening that they don't think about how this is, in effect, morning light reduction time," said Avery.

In 2011, Russia rejected the notion of changing the clocks and moved to stay permanently on daylight saving, or summer, time.

The move was determined to be a failure after three years, he said, when studies showed a decrease in academic performance among high-school students and higher rates of winter depression, mortality and cancer.

“I just think this is a massive experiment and that there are going to be some unexpected consequences from this,” he said. “Even night owls will hate it.”

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, told [The Guardian](#) that Russians were fed up with the time changes because they caused “stress and illnesses” and “upset the human biorhythm.”

“It’s irritating, people wake up early and don’t know what to do with themselves for the spare hour,” he said. “And that’s not to mention the unhappy cows and other animals that don’t understand the clocks changing and don’t understand why the milkmaids come to them at a different time.”

The change in Russia was initially popular, but it became widely disliked in a short time and was abolished in 2014 with the lower house of [parliament voting 442 to 1 to return to standard time](#) and stay there.

Officials said permanent summer time created stress and health problems, especially for people in northern Russia. They cited medical reports of increased morning road accidents in 2012 compared to previous years, blaming them firmly on the 2011 time change, [the BBC reported](#).

Avery said switching the clock back and forth is not ideal, but it’s the best option among the choices: permanent standard time, permanent daylight time or our current method of springing forward and falling back.

Riccelli said he wants the conversation to begin in Washington state next year and he’s willing to have the conversation include a move to permanent standard time, though he and most of the voters he heard from, prefer daylight saving time.

“Anything we can do to ditch the switch and never go back makes sense.”

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HEADLINE	11/04 School districts study changing calendar
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/education/washington-disctricts-balanced-school-year-calendar-shorter-summer-break/281-356879a8-c97b-47da-ac75-4edb2e80886b
GIST	<p>LACEY, Wash. — Students who got used to online classes and wearing masks on campus might have to adjust their summer plans in the coming school years.</p> <p>According to Washington State’s Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 18 school districts and one charter school are using grant funding to explore shortening the traditional summer break to allow for what’s known as a balanced school calendar.</p> <p>“It’s not year-round school, it’s just allocating the days differently throughout the school year,” said North Thurston Public Schools Asst. Superintendent Monty Sabin.</p> <p>Sabin said the district has formed a 50-person steering committee, made up of administrators, teachers, students, and community partners to explore changing the school calendar.</p>

Students would still be required to attend 180 days of instruction, but instead of an 11-week summer break and longer fall, winter and spring sessions, the district could switch to four, 45-day quarters with either two or three-week breaks throughout the year, in addition to a five to eight-week summer.

Sabin said research shows students fall behind during long summer breaks.

“The whole idea of the balanced calendar is to reduce the impact of learning loss on kids, especially kids of low-income families,” said Sabin. “When you look over the elementary span of time, that gap can be a couple of years.”

North Thurston will hold community meetings on the topic starting in December before making a recommendation to the school board in May. Sabin is eager to hear what community members, parents, students and staff think about the idea.

Julie Popper, a spokesperson for the largest teacher's union in the state, the Washington Education Association (WEA), said, "WEA feels decisions about the school year calendar must be made collaboratively with families and educators at the table to make sure changes are reflective of our students' needs."

Sabin said if approved, the new calendar could be implemented, over a two-year period starting during the 2022-23 school year.

According to OSPI, the 18 districts obtaining grant funding to explore balanced schedules are: Columbia School District (Walla Walla), Crescent School District, Elma School District, Kittitas School District, Lopez School District, Mount Adams School District, Mount Vernon School District, North Thurston Public Schools, Oakville School District, Olympia School District, Selah School District, Soap Lake School District, Thorp School District, Union Gap School District, Vancouver School District, Wahluke School District, Winlock School District, Yakima School District.

One charter school, Rainier Valley Leadership Academy, is using grant funding to look at calendar changes.

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HEADLINE	11/04 Ongoing problem: tents, homeless camps
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/project-seattle/tents-homeless-campers-are-ongoing-problem-for-pioneer-square-and-seattle-neighborhoods
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — With new leadership on the horizon, many neighborhoods are hoping to see change with the ongoing problems they face involving drugs, homeless campers, and their tents.</p> <p>Tents continue to be a concern in many communities.</p> <p>Cristina Dioguardi and her business “Beyond Threads” have been in Pioneer Square on South Jackson Street for more than two decades.</p> <p>Like business owners in other neighborhoods, she’s seeing more tents show up on city sidewalks.</p> <p>“In the middle of the day, the guy decides to plop his tent 20 feet away from our doorway,” Dioguardi said. “There were people coming from the train station with luggage. They were literally having to step into the street where cars were coming because they can’t get through.”</p> <p>She said some of the homeless campers also bring drug abuse concerns.</p> <p>"Yesterday, he was smoking drugs right in front of us," Dioguardi said.</p> <p>Across the street from her business, 8 tents are set up in front of the King Street Station.</p>

"This is a citywide problem," Dioguardi said.

Dioguardi has reached out for help.

"We called immediately the Metropolitan Improvement District, MIS just because they're supposed to help us with situations like this," Dioguardi said. "They say they would only come to do a compassionate call--which means they would check on him to make sure he's OK. They get the compassionate call to see if they're OK. But, we don't get a compassionate call to see how we're doing."

City leaders right now and future city leaders (need) to start making a difference and getting people off the street. Be compassionate, yes. But (also) be compassionate to us--your small business owners that are really struggling to make it."

Dioguardi realizes the pandemic has forced a lot of people onto the streets, but she's concerned about people who remain on the streets even after social service workers approach them.

"Most of these people are choosing to stay in here in these tents," Dioguardi said. "They're not going to shelters. They're not going to these apartments provided by the cities because they want to keep doing drugs."

She hopes new Seattle leadership will bring changes and solutions for the homelessness crisis.

Pioneer Square Alliance says new programs have helped move some homeless campers and tents off the streets.

"Between the Just Cares program, the Clean City Initiative, the Regional Homeless Authority launching, and just open communications to be able to identify some of the issues we talk about, I have a lot of hope for the future that we're going to be able to address tents or homeless encampments quickly," said Lisa Howard, Executive Director of Alliance for Pioneer Square.

I reached out to the City of Seattle as well as Downtown Seattle Association for comment.

DSA said if there is a tent blocking the entry of a business, the owner should use the city's "Fix It, Find It App."

DSA went on to say:

"This is a way to notify the proper city departments about the encampment and to begin the process of outreach. If a business is within the 285-square blocks of the Metropolitan Improvement District and has a person blocking the doorway, and has conditions of entry displayed, then our safety team will approach the person in the doorway to notify them that they are trespassing."

Many people said they have tried the "Fix It, Find It App" and they are frustrated because they are still unable to get help from the city of Seattle.

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HEADLINE	11/04 Trade deficit hits fresh record
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-trade-deficit-hits-fresh-record-on-goods-demand-higher-inflation-11636029815
GIST	The U.S. trade deficit widened in September to \$80.9 billion, a record, driven by climbing demand for capital goods like computers and electric equipment and industrial supplies that have been soaring in cost as global supply chains remain snarled .

The deficit in trade of goods and services grew 11.2% in September, the Commerce Department said Thursday. The trade deficit has been trending wider throughout the economic recovery, but this was the sharpest monthly increase in the deficit since July of 2020. Imports rose by 0.6% to \$288.5 billion, also a monthly record.

The trade deficit is being driven wider by shifting patterns of demand for the raw materials and inputs for American factories and retailers, which are precisely where supply chains have been so clogged and where imported inflation has been running rampant.

“U.S. importers have been scrambling to restock retail shelves ahead of the holiday shopping season, and the turmoil in global supply chains has added to demand as businesses tried to build precautionary inventories,” Bill Adams, a senior economist at PNC Bank, said.

After collapsing during the pandemic, global trade has roared back this year, repeatedly pushing the U.S. trade deficit to record levels. Earlier in the year, it was [a resurgent U.S. consumer](#), bolstered by multiple rounds of government stimulus, that helped drive demand for imports.

Separate figures released by the government on Thursday showed that worker filings for unemployment benefits continued their steady downward march, as they approached levels last seen before the pandemic.

The Labor Department also reported that productivity of U.S. workers fell at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 5%, the largest quarterly decrease since 1981. Unit labor cost rose 8.3%, a sign employers are facing wage inflation. The figures represent the continued uneven impact of the pandemic on the labor market, where high labor demand and a shortage of workers pushed up hours and compensation, while overall economic output lagged behind.

Trade exports fell by 3% to \$207.6 billion in September, as Americans shipped out fewer of the same industrial supplies and capital goods that are in high demand. Exports were also likely depressed by Hurricane Ida, which had struck Louisiana early in September and led to a temporary halt in oil production there.

But that dynamic has shifted in recent months. Imports of consumer goods have sagged—falling in most months since hitting a peak in March and dropping again slightly, by \$81 million, in September. The value of apparel imports fell 2.1% in the first 9 months of 2021, compared with the same period in 2020.

Meanwhile, American demand for industrial supplies and fuels has surged. The value of imports of iron and steel were up 93% in the first 9 months of 2021 compared with the same period last year. Wood rose 79% while copper rose 82%

That has driven prices higher and led to more imports of those goods and, in September, fewer exports. Over the past year, imports of industrial supplies have risen by 56%.

Prices have been further driven up by economies that are out of sync. While the U.S. economy has increasingly opened, with businesses ramping up activity, many of their suppliers in Asia were entering renewed lockdowns this fall.

Loudoun Lumber in Purcellville, Va., is telling customers that orders for two-by-fours and other framing materials that once took two days to fulfill now take three weeks, said owner Michael Hubbard. His company sells windows, doors, trim and lumber mainly to contractors in a Washington, D.C., exurb with strong home remodeling activity.

Price increases, Mr. Hubbard said, are being driven by shipping costs. “This will be harsh to say, but it’s basically extortion at this point,” he said. “Containers were costing \$2,000, \$2,500 to bring over. Now, they’re \$20,000. No one is balking at it because there’s no inventory available to meet the needs.”

	<p>Overall, the price of imported industrial supplies as of September has risen 35% from a year ago, according to a separate Labor Department report on import prices. The price of fuels and lubricants has risen 69%. The price of unfinished metals are up 32.5% while finished metals are up 24.8% from a year ago.</p> <p>The price of imported consumer goods, by contrast, has risen just 1.4% in the 12 months through September.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 Meat sticker shock looms: worker shortfall
SOURCE	https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/meat-sticker-shock-looms-as-3-000-bonuses-fail-to-end-worker-shortfall-1.1676898
GIST	<p>With the pandemic igniting a collective reassessment of work, imagine posting openings for low-wage jobs that could require standing for 12-hour shifts, working six-day weeks and repeatedly lifting 70-pound objects in conditions that range from steaming hot to bloody and ice cold. And on top of all that, your industry recently made headlines for COVID-19 outbreaks that killed workers.</p> <p>This is precisely what meatpackers are facing.</p> <p>Of all the industries experiencing crunches for hourly labor, it's hard to find one with a greater recruiting challenge. Companies have tried all the usual tricks to lure applicants, including offering signing bonuses of as much as US\$3,000, but they're still short workers and, as a result, there are an increasing number of sparse shelves.</p> <p>For America's meateaters, this is a problem. Some cuts have soared 25 per cent over the past year, while others are fetching near record prices, making meat one of the biggest contributors to pandemic inflation. And industry experts expect meat to keep gaining through the holidays and beyond.</p> <p>"The sticker shock is what we all need to be prepared for," said Bindiya Vakil, chief executive officer of supply-chain consultant Resilinc. "This is here to stay, at least through the summer of 2022."</p> <p>Before COVID, meat processors struggled to meet their labor needs, which increased the hiring of immigrant workers mostly from Mexico. More than a third of the workforce was foreign born, according to a 2020 report by the Economic Policy Institute. That hurt the industry when the Trump administration curtailed immigration.</p> <p>The pandemic only exacerbated the hiring woes, while raising new concerns about how meatpackers will recruit in the long term. The industry expected the labor shortage to get easier after extra unemployment benefits in the COVID relief ended in September, but it hasn't. Across the overall job market, the number of people quitting is surging and job openings remain near all-time highs. Online postings for meat processing positions are up 66 per cent from a year ago, according to Emsi Burning Glass, an analytics firm.</p> <p>"Employers are going to get increasingly desperate," said Ron Hetrick, senior labor economist at Emsi Burning Glass.</p> <p>Meanwhile, retailers and shipping companies are adding to the pressure with plans to hire hundreds of thousands of workers for the holidays. Amazon alone aims to bring on 150,000 temps, a 50 per cent increase from a year ago, at an average starting hourly wage of at least US\$18, which exceeds or matches a lot of meat processing jobs. The labor battle in retail has been intense for years, pushing chains to boost pay and add benefits such as parental leave and college reimbursement.</p> <p>Christopher Young, executive director for American Association of Meat Processors, said there isn't an easy answer. But the industry is working to establish butcher programs at colleges and internships. He also</p>

said meatpackers need to get better at marketing their career opportunities, a hurdle facing other fields that rely on blue collar workers.

“It can be difficult to compete with some of the wages being offered, as well as the type of work,” said Young, who has been with the trade group since 2013. “Our industry can be hard work, but also rewarding as you are meeting the needs of feeding people. It is going to take a while to get people back to work.”

Smithfield Foods, the world’s biggest pork producer, is paying workers more, but also touting perks like US\$2,500 relocation payments and Walmart gift cards. Rival JBS SA is offering signing and retention bonuses totaling US\$3,200. And it’s trying to lure people to job fairs with free lunch.

“It’s been a challenge,” said Jim Monroe, vice president of corporate affairs for Smithfield.

Meat processors can also invest in automation to boost productivity and reduce labor, according to Glynn Tonsor, a professor of agricultural economics at Kansas State University. However, the industry has been pursuing this for years with little to show for it, he said. It’s also pushing for the federal government to expand work visas.

The dearth of staff has caused bottlenecks, especially for offerings that need extra labor to cut meat off the bone. Hams are selling at a record. Prices for sirloin, boneless chuck roast and bacon have jumped by about 25 per cent over the past year.

The price gains have gotten the attention of the White House, which claimed the biggest meat processors were profiteering at the expense of farmers and consumers — a charge the industry denied.

Meatpackers are indeed generating big profits amid rising prices and robust demand, including from overseas markets. Tyson Foods Inc., the biggest U.S. meat company, said staff shortages mean it needs six days to complete five days worth of work. But it’s still on track to post record beef margins this year.

So the industry does have room to keep increasing pay, but that might not be enough. Entry-level roles at warehouses, retailers and restaurants generally pay less than a meat plant, but processing animals is more taxing with workers donning face shields, masks and gloves and sometimes doing repetitive cutting motions for hours on end.

There’s also the blood and guts, and how the industry mishandled COVID. Early in the pandemic, rural areas with meatpacking plants became epicenters of the virus. By late April of 2020, infections in those geographies were 10 times the rate of other rural counties, according to a government report.

Job postings on hiring website Glassdoor.com show the meat industry’s recruiting challenge. Bullet points include mandatory overtime and weekend shifts, exposure to pungent odors and repetitive tasks like removing animal organs. One listing paying as little as US\$14 an hour in Fort McCoy, Florida, requires the ability to withstand “noisy environments for several hours” and “climbing, lifting, reaching, balancing, bending, twisting, walking and stooping.”

Cooks Venture, which sells pasture-raised beef and chicken, is emblematic of what’s happening. It has struggled to fill the night shift at a plant in Oklahoma. And that’s with starting wages of as much as US\$20 an hour, plus health insurance and US\$1,500 signing bonuses.

“It’s still hard to find good people who want to work in a chicken plant, regardless,” said CEO Matt Wadiak, also a co-founder of Blue Apron. “Everybody is struggling for people.”

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HEADLINE	11/04 Vaccines effectiveness dramatic decline
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/study-shows-dramatic-decline-in-effectiveness-of-covid-19-vaccines-over-time/

As the delta variant became the dominant strain of coronavirus across the United States, all three COVID-19 vaccines available to Americans lost some of their protective power, with vaccine efficacy among a large group of veterans dropping between 35% and 85%, according to a new study.

Researchers who scoured the records of nearly 800,000 U.S. veterans found that in early March, just as the delta variant was gaining a foothold across American communities, the three vaccines were roughly equal in their ability to prevent infections.

But over the next six months, that changed dramatically.

By the end of September, Moderna's two-dose COVID-19 vaccine, measured as 89% effective in March, was only 58% effective.

The effectiveness of the Pfizer vaccine, which also employs two doses, fell from 87% to 45% in the same period.

And most strikingly, the protective power of Johnson & Johnson's single-dose vaccine plunged from 86% to just 13% over those six months.

[The findings](#) were published Thursday in the journal Science.

The three vaccines held up better in their ability to prevent COVID-19 deaths, but by July — as the delta variant began to drive a three-month surge of infections and deaths — the shots' effectiveness on that score also revealed wide gaps.

Among veterans 65 and older who were inoculated with the Moderna vaccine, those who developed a "breakthrough" infection were 76% less likely to die of COVID-19 compared with unvaccinated veterans of the same age.

Older veterans who got the Pfizer vaccine and subsequently experienced a breakthrough infection were 70% less likely to die than were their unvaccinated peers.

And when older vets who got a single jab of the J&J vaccine suffered a breakthrough infection, they were 52% less likely to die than their peers who didn't get any shots.

For veterans under 65, the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines provided the best protection against a fatal case of COVID-19, at 84% and 82%, respectively. When younger veterans inoculated with the J&J vaccine suffered a breakthrough infection, they were 73% less likely to die of COVID-19 than were their unvaccinated peers.

Johnson & Johnson representatives did not immediately respond to requests to discuss the study's findings.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recommended booster shots for [everyone who got the Johnson & Johnson vaccine](#) at least two months earlier.

[Boosters are also recommended](#) six months after a second dose of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines for everyone 65 and older; those with medical conditions that make them more vulnerable to a serious case of COVID-19; those who live in nursing homes or other group settings; and those who live or work in high-risk settings like hospitals or prisons.

In addition, all people with compromised immune systems are advised to get a booster shot if it's been at least 28 days since their vaccine took full effect.

With millions of vaccinated Americans pondering whether they need a boost, the new study offers the most comprehensive comparison yet of how the three vaccines have performed across the nation this year.

It tracked 780,225 veterans of the U.S. armed forces from Feb. 1 to Oct. 1. Close to 500,000 of them had been vaccinated, while just under 300,000 had not.

Hailing from across the country, all were cared for by the Veterans Affairs' unified system, which provides health care to 2.7% of the U.S. population. While the group under study was ethnically and racially diverse, the record-keeping that researchers relied upon was uniform.

Because these were veterans, the study population comprised six times as many men as women. And they skewed older: about 48% were 65 or older, 29% were between 50 and 64, and 24% were under 50.

While older veterans were more likely to die than younger vets throughout the study period, the decline of the vaccines' protection against illness and death was seen in both young and old.

The study was conducted by a team from the Public Health Institute in Oakland, California, the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in San Francisco, and the University of Texas Health Science Center.

[Dr. Barbara Cohn](#), the study's lead author, said in addition to its comparison of COVID-19 vaccines, the group's analysis provides "a lens for making informed decisions around primary vaccination, booster shots, and other multiple layers of protection." That includes mask mandates, coronavirus testing and other public health measures aimed at countering viral spread.

Strong evidence of the vaccines' declining power should prompt even states and locales with highly vaccinated populations to consider retaining mask mandates, the authors said. And the findings strongly support the CDC's recent recommendation that all recipients of the J&J vaccine get a booster.

The study concluded that the delta variant, which drove a wave of infections and deaths across the country this spring and summer, was likely the factor that most eroded the protection of vaccines.

Other researchers have found [similar evidence](#) of declining vaccine effectiveness. But they have suggested that the immune system's defenses against SARS-CoV-2 simply fade with time, and that waning vaccine effectiveness would likely have been seen with or without the arrival of a new, [more transmissible strain](#).

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HEADLINE	11/04 WSP replaces longtime staff psychologist
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/times-watchdog/wsp-replaces-long-time-psychologist-after-seattle-times-story-on-hiring-concerns-lack-of-diversity/
GIST	<p>Bowing to criticism about its hiring process, the Washington State Patrol has temporarily replaced its longtime staff psychologist with an outside contractor to screen trooper candidates.</p> <p>The switch comes about a month after a Seattle Times and public radio Northwest News Network investigation documented years of red flags around the agency's psychological evaluations, including recent evidence they may disproportionately reject applicants of color.</p> <p>Chief John Batiste had previously resisted calls for outsourcing the evaluations, despite repeated concerns raised about the methods of the WSP's staff psychologist for the last 27 years, Daniel Clark. But in recent weeks Gov. Jay Inslee and key legislators applied pressure to make changes towards diversifying the WSP.</p> <p>The new contractor brings the WSP in line with common psychological screening practices, but that change alone can't diversify the force. As of last year, WSP troopers were 87% white and 90% male — percentages that haven't budged in the last two decades even as the state has become much more diverse, and the WSP itself tried to recruit more candidates of color.</p>

The psychological screenings conducted by Clark are a late, key step in a long hiring process. After a rejection from Clark, candidates were almost never hired.

“Something that’s been in place this long, and is this systemic, doesn’t change easy,” said Rep. Bill Ramos, D-Issaquah. “We’re just trying to pick apart every piece we can to address the systemic problems.”

In recent weeks, legislators pressed Inslee for action. A group of lawmakers requested a video call with Inslee after the Times story ran, Ramos said. They included members of the House and Senate transportation committees, which oversee the WSP, and some from the Legislature’s Members of Color Caucuses.

“It’s been the work we’ve been doing for a number of years, but this finally just put it out on the table for everybody to see,” Ramos said. “We basically went in and said, ‘Here, look, have you read this article? Are you aware of what’s happening?’ ”

Inslee, who can appoint and fire the WSP chief, relayed the concerns to Batiste, the governor’s spokesperson said. Inslee “urged the Patrol to do better and explore other options for the hiring process,” Tara Lee, the spokesperson, said in an email. Batiste has been chief since 2005.

The WSP signed a contract with Lynnwood-based Public Safety Psychological Services that began on Oct. 26 and lasts through June 2022. Clark finished his previously scheduled exams last week, and the new company took over Monday, a WSP spokesperson said.

Meanwhile, the WSP is hiring an outside auditor to evaluate the psychological screenings, a process that is expected to take three to six months. The agency is “waiting for results of the audit before making long term decisions,” Capt. Neil Weaver said. Clark remains on the payroll and will continue to perform other duties besides evaluations.

Lawmakers also summoned Batiste to a hearing of the Joint Transportation Committee scheduled for Nov. 17. They plan to question him on hiring issues, including the psychological evaluations, said Sen. Steve Hobbs, D-Lake Stevens, chair of the Senate Transportation Committee.

Some lawmakers say the change isn’t happening quickly enough.

“I think they should recognize they have a serious problem,” said Sen. Kevin Van De Wege, D-Sequim, who has previously questioned Clark’s role. “They don’t need any study... to realize they have a serious problem, and they should probably do some house cleaning.”

Clark did not reply to an interview request for this story. Previously, he defended his process and blamed any racial imbalance on the national written tests he administers.

“I treat everybody as an individual and make my recommendations based on an individual assessment,” Clark said. “Psychologically, I don’t believe that there is bias.”

Consultants and internal critics have highlighted Clark’s high rejection rate and questioned his approach for years. In 2015, the WSP head of human resources questioned Clark’s methods, including the uncommon practice of rejecting candidates based on their written tests alone, but he was rebuffed by both Clark and Batiste.

A 2016 legislative report determined that the psychological stage was failing WSP candidates who were later hired at local departments, while the agency was struggling to recruit and retain troopers. The authors recommended outsourcing some or all of the psychological screenings, but the agency didn’t act.

Earlier this year, the multinational consulting firm Deloitte found that minorities in a recent group of applicants failed at significantly higher rates than their white counterparts.

Internal data reviewed by The Seattle Times and Northwest News Network shows the psychological screening rejected 20% of white candidates over the four years ending in January. In contrast, 33% of Black candidates, 35% of Hispanic candidates and 41% of Asian candidates were not recommended for a job, according to the data.

“Every focus group and multiple key executives reported concerns of bias in the psychological evaluation process and recommended a review of the process,” the Deloitte consultants wrote.

“Without diversification of evaluators, there is not a system in place for appeals or second opinions. This could be a contributing factor to the high rates of failure for all applicants, and especially applicants of color,” the consultants said.

Again, the consultants recommended hiring a new psychologist, but Batiste resisted —until now.

The agency is already scheduling evaluations with Public Safety Psychological Services, a spokesperson said, as the WSP hopes to hire 60 cadets by February. The WSP signed a sole-source contract to conduct psychological evaluations, but the work may be opened up to bidding depending on the results of the audit, Weaver said. Previously, the company worked with the WSP on other projects.

Public Safety Psychological Services has seven psychologists licensed in Washington, said Cerise Vablais, one of the owners of the company. It serves more than 200 public safety agencies in the Pacific Northwest, including the Seattle Police Department, the Bellevue Police Department and the Pierce County Sheriff’s Department.

“We’re really committed to keeping our practice evolving as the culture of policing evolves,” Vablais said.

The company’s process differs from Clark’s in a few key ways. It doesn’t reject candidates based on their written tests alone — something Clark did in certain cases. WSP data shows those rejections disproportionately impacted candidates of color.

Also, the firm uses an A-F grading scale, instead of three categories that Clark used: “recommend,” “not recommend” or “marginal.” One of the criticisms of Clark was that he wielded an inordinate amount of power late in the hiring process, and his rejections were nearly impossible to overcome.

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HEADLINE	11/04 SPD chief concern: weapons restrictions
SOURCE	https://publicola.com/2021/11/04/police-chief/?shared=email&msg=fail
GIST	<p>Seattle Interim Police Chief Adrian Diaz expressed his support last week for most of the recommendations the city’s Office of the Inspector General issued in July as part of its year-long review of SPD’s response to protests in the summer and fall of 2020. But he argued that some of the office’s recommendations—specifically, those suggesting the department scale back its use of tear gas and batons during demonstrations—don’t mesh with legislation passed by the city council in August restricting his department’s use of crowd control weapons, asserting that the restrictions actually increased the chances that SPD will use batons and tear gas during future protests.</p> <p>Drawing from a year of panel discussions with representatives from both SPD and police accountability advocates, the OIG—an independent police oversight body that audits both the Seattle Police Department and its Office of Police Accountability—suggested several changes to the way SPD trains officers to respond to protests, including a recommendation that officers not form immovable lines in front of protesters. The panel assembled by the OIG also recommended that the department consider replacing radio communications with an encrypted messaging system like WhatsApp and create a central command center to streamline communications between officers during demonstrations.</p>

In a [letter to Inspector General Lisa Judge made public last Friday](#), Diaz said he supported the idea of revamping his department's protest management strategies to avoid a repeat of last summer's mistakes. SPD has already started retraining officers to avoid making arrests for minor tussles during protests, he wrote, and the department is purchasing new, "more subdued" uniforms to replace the intimidating body armor worn by officers during last year's protests.

The chief also used his letter to raise concerns about the city council's decision in August to restrict on his department's use of so-called "crowd control" weapons. "It would be naive," he wrote, to believe that SPD won't need crowd control weapons to respond to protests in the future.

But Diaz was skeptical of other recommendations, including a suggestion that SPD change department policy to allow officers to show support for protesters, which Diaz said could create "legal complexities" for the department. And in response to a recommendation that SPD rely on CCTV cameras to spot acts of property destruction, Diaz noted that his department might need city council approval to expand its surveillance authority.

The chief also used his letter to raise concerns about the city council's decision in August to restrict on his department's use of so-called "crowd control" weapons. "It would be naive," he wrote, to believe that SPD won't need crowd control weapons to respond to protests in the future. In fact, Diaz argued that the only way to meet the OIG's broader call to reduce serious uses of force against protesters, including tear gas, is for the department to purchase greater supply and variety of crowd control weapons.

While the OIG's report urged his department to avoid using batons and tear gas against protesters, Diaz warned that under the new restrictions, his officers could be more likely to use those weapons as a last resort.

His warning is not new. In August, the council rewrote an earlier crowd-control ordinance, which banned the use of tear gas, blast balls, and other "less-lethal" weapons, after a federal judge blocked that law, citing the risk that SPD might resort to using batons against protesters if they didn't have access to pepper spray and tear gas. But even after the council revised the ordinance, Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan [refused to sign it](#), predicting that the federal court would once again intervene to stop the new restrictions from taking effect. At the time, Diaz didn't publicly side with Durkan; his letter to the OIG is the first sign that he may have reservations. For now, Diaz declined to comment on what lays ahead for the new law.

Several of Diaz's subordinates—including Lieutenant John Brooks, the on-the-ground commander during many of last year's protests—helped shape the recommendations. However, because the OIG finished its review before the council passed the latest version of the crowd control weapons bill, the office's panel of stakeholders didn't factor the new law into their recommendations.

The new restrictions on crowd control weapons can't take effect without the federal court's approval—a consequence of the 2012 agreement between Seattle and the US Department of Justice known as the consent decree, which placed a federal judge in charge of overseeing reforms to SPD. The department has until mid-November to draft policies on crowd control weapons that reflect the new law.

In his letter, Diaz also noted another key variable for the department: the city budget. "Our ability to implement change hinges precariously on our budget and staffing," he wrote, "both of which have been under significant threat over the past 18 months." For now, he added, SPD is relying on grants and dollars from the nonprofit Seattle Police Foundation to pay for training programs. Though he avoided making any explicit demands, his underlying argument was clear: If the OIG wants SPD to implement its recommendations, the office will need to go to bat for SPD's budget.

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HEADLINE	11/05 Active-duty police on Oath Keepers rosters
SOURCE	https://www.npr.org/2021/11/05/1052098059/active-duty-police-in-major-u-s-cities-appear-on-purported-oath-keepers-rosters

Leaked records purportedly from a far-right organization suggest that its effort to recruit law enforcement officers has found some success in America's largest cities. Investigations by NPR and WNYC/Gothamist show active officers in New York City, Los Angeles and Chicago on the Oath Keepers membership roster, with Chicago showing the greatest representation of the three.

Extremism and policing experts say the findings are reason for concern, as the far-right paramilitary organization encourages members to uphold the law only as they interpret it. But defining a clear standard on officers' affiliation with groups such as the Oath Keepers is tricky, as it could run afoul of officers' free speech and free assembly rights.

A far-right paramilitary organization

The Oath Keepers have been on the radar of extremism researchers and federal law enforcement for about as long as the group has existed. But the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol dramatically intensified scrutiny of the group.

Founded in 2009 by Stewart Rhodes, a former army paratrooper, the Oath Keepers target law enforcement and military personnel for recruitment. The paramilitary organization claims to defend the Constitution, and reaffirms the oath of service to "support and defend the Constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic."

In practice, members of the loosely organized network have been a presence at armed standoffs against federal authorities in situations that its members believe constitute government overreach. More recently, Oath Keepers have shown up at racial justice protests in opposition to Black Lives Matter and far-left Antifa activists. Part of the so-called patriot movement on the right, the group's ideology began as an anti-government movement, but refashioned itself as a Pro-Trump extremist group, specifically targeting leftist groups and the supposed deep state.

Federal prosecutors have brought charges against at least 21 people with alleged ties to the group and participated in the Jan. 6 attack. Prosecutors allege that members of the Oath Keepers conspired over the course of weeks and months to bring weapons and armor to the Washington, DC-area ahead of the riot and used military-style tactics to breach the building.

Prosecutors have not named the head of the group, Rhodes, in indictments against alleged Oath Keepers, but he is identified as "Person One" in court papers, suggesting that investigators are interested in what he was doing on the day of the riot. Rhodes was allegedly in Washington, D.C. that day, and met with Oath Keepers who breached the Capitol outside the building. Rhodes has not been accused of entering the Capitol himself, and he has said publicly was unaware of any plan by any Oath Keepers to attack the Capitol.

"Some of our guys got caught up and went inside the Capitol, which I think was a massive mistake, but I don't think there was any conspiracy on their part to do that," Rhodes told the [Wichita Times Record News](#) in June.

In September, an anonymous hacker released records purportedly taken from the Oath Keepers web servers, which NPR and WNYC/Gothamist obtained through the non-profit journalist collective [Distributed Denial of Secrets](#). Included in the leak were some of the group's chat logs, emails and a list of nearly 40,000 entries, seemingly including those currently and formerly on its membership rolls.

Comparing the membership roster to lists of officers in the [Chicago Police Department](#), New York Police Department, Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, reporters were able to identify active officers who appeared to be on both. NPR and WNYC reached out to all those officers for comment. The list of officers in California comes from the database of POST Profiles maintained by California government's Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) as well as [public payroll data](#). [The California Reporting Project](#) obtained the POST database current through April 13, 2021, through open records requests and shared it with NPR.

Chicago Police Department: 13 active members

"I didn't even know this thing still existed," said one Chicago police department employee, speaking about the Oath Keepers. He agreed to speak to NPR on the condition that he not be named.

The uniformed employee, who said he could not recall when or why he joined the group, said he had let his Oath Keepers membership lapse many years ago. His listed address in the leaked database was that of a city police station where he confirmed he was working in 2009.

He was one of thirteen active members of the Chicago Police Department that NPR identified as likely matches on the Oath Keepers list. The Chicago officers range in age from 42 to 54 and are white, Hispanic and of Asian/Pacific heritage. Five of them work in "training and support," which includes firearms training.

Among those in the leaked documents is a Phillip Singto with an address in Chicago. NPR found a sworn officer working in CPD's training and support unit by the same name. A LinkedIn profile for a Phillip Singto in the Greater Chicago Area lists experience as a firearms instructor at the Chicago Police Academy, and mentions "Oathkeepers" under the Accomplishments section. That social media page indicates that Singto also works as a firearms trainer in a [personal capacity](#).

NPR attempted to reach Singto for comment, but did not receive any reply.

Another CPD member who agreed only to speak to NPR on the condition that he not be named acknowledged joining the Oath Keepers more than a decade ago, but said he let his membership lapse after four or five years.

"It's not a terrorist group," he said, adding that he had heard about the Oath Keepers from others on the police force. At the time, he said, he was among a handful of officers who joined because they felt that Chicago's ban on handguns, which the U.S. Supreme Court [ultimately struck down](#), was unconstitutional. "Officers can't take away someone's gun rights because they live in Chicago," he said.

Despite telling NPR that he doesn't engage in social media, the CPD member shared personal details that matched to a Facebook page, including his name, military service and residences in both Chicago and another specifically named state. That page included several photos uploaded in March of 2015 that included imagery to suggest affiliation with the Oath Keepers.

The day after the uniformed CPD employee spoke with NPR, the Facebook profile had been altered to change the name, remove biographical details, and strip out photos that included Oath Keepers iconography.

When asked about the alleged participation of Oath Keepers in the Jan. 6 Capitol riot, both CPD members said they don't pay attention to the news. In the immediate aftermath of those events, however, the head of Chicago's largest police union [condoned](#) the actions of those who stormed the Capitol before a backlash prompted him to [walk back](#) those comments.

Two others that NPR identified as matches between the Oath Keepers database and the Chicago Police Department denied they ever joined the anti-government group, with one suggesting that a third party had signed him up for the group as "a sort of set-up to get police officers." The others did not respond to voicemails and emails.

NPR reached out to the CPD but received no response. Chicago's Office of the Inspector General would not comment on the record.

'We have a problem with white supremacy'

NPR did not identify any active members of the Los Angeles Police Department within the Oath Keepers data. However, NPR found at least three people in the data leak whose information matched current

employees of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. The Sheriff's Department is one of the largest law enforcement agencies in the country, and runs one of the largest jail systems in the world.

NPR left voicemails and sent email messages to all three. When NPR reached one of the three officers on the phone, he said "no comment" and hung up. The other two did not respond. In previous years, one of the three posted a link to the Oath Keeper's website on his public Twitter account.

In response to NPR's request for comment, a spokesperson for the Sheriff's Department wrote in a statement, "The Department was unaware of these allegations of association and will assign a supervisor to conduct an administrative inquiry. Until the conclusion of those supervisory inquiries, we are unable to comment further."

The leaders of local government agencies that oversee the Sheriff's Department said that they were concerned by NPR's findings, but not surprised, given recent scrutiny of deputy sub-groups in the department - often referred to as "gangs" or "cliques."

"The Sheriff's department in Los Angeles has extremist organizations within its ranks," said Max Huntsman, the County Inspector General, and a frequent critic of the Department.

Huntsman's office has posted recent reports from [Loyola Law School](#) and the [RAND Corporation](#) on its website, which delve into the problem.

Those reports found a significant portion of Sheriff's Deputies have participated in sub-groups - often referred to as "gangs" or "cliques." Those groups have been accused of violent attacks and racial discrimination over decades. The reports specifically note one group active in the Compton, Calif. station known as "The Executioners," whose members have a tattoo resembling a skeleton wearing a Nazi helmet. According to the RAND Corporation report, which was commissioned by county officials, a whistleblower alleged that "the Executioners encouraged shootings of civilians and had assaulted at least one other deputy at the station."

Huntsman said that the leader of the sheriff's department, Alex Villanueva, has failed to root out extremism in the ranks.

Priscilla Ocen, the chair of the Los Angeles County Civilian Oversight Commission, agreed.

"We have a problem with white supremacy in the L.A. County Sheriff's Department," said Ocen. "We have a problem with white supremacist gangs. And the sheriff who is tasked with managing this department has looked the other way."

In the past, Villanueva has [dismissed concerns](#) about deputy sub-groups or gangs as "a problem of perception, but not reality." He has previously said that many such groups are benign, and involve, "a glorified bunch of people who go to the river and party on the weekend and that's about it."

Huntsman argued that the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department appears to act as if it is above the law, particularly given the Department's decision to disobey a county COVID-19 vaccine mandate. Villanueva has criticized the mandate, and said he would not enforce it, because the measure would lead to a "[mass exodus](#)" of deputies who refuse to get vaccinated against the coronavirus.

Nationwide, extremism experts have raised concerns about sheriff's departments' links to possible extremist groups. [LAist](#) recently reported that the head of California's Riverside County Sheriff Department, Chad Bianco, had previously joined the Oath Keepers. Bianco denounced the group's alleged role in the attack on the U.S. Capitol, but said that was unrepresentative of the Oath Keepers. "They stand for protecting the Constitution," Bianco told LAist.

Researchers and civil rights organizations have also noted the rise of a movement known as "constitutional sheriffs." The Anti-Defamation League [said](#) that the movement is based on the belief that "the county

sheriff is the ultimate authority in the county, able to halt enforcement of any federal or state law or measure they deem unconstitutional."

In New York, an ongoing investigation

Following an [investigation](#) by WNYC/Gothamist in September that found at least two active members of the New York Police Department on the leaked Oath Keepers list, city leaders quickly vowed action. The office of Mayor Bill de Blasio launched an investigation, but has allowed the NYPD to conduct its own internal review into the two officers. A spokesperson for the mayor did not answer a detailed list of questions about the investigation's scope, but a recent statement from the police department suggests little may come of it.

"Although the investigation into the two members is still active, to date, the Internal Affairs Bureau has not found evidence supporting active memberships or participation in any Oath Keepers activities," it said.

'A difficult balance'

With [nearly 18,000](#) state and local law enforcement agencies across the country, there is little consensus around how — or even whether — departments should address the issue of officers joining anti-government organizations.

"How do you balance an officer's freedom of speech, freedom of association with the need to maintain public trust and to ensure that they're delivering constitutional policing?" said Sue Rahr, former Sheriff of King County, Washington and former executive director of the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission. "It's a difficult balance."

Nonetheless, extremism experts say law enforcement officers who take an oath only to defend the Constitution as they interpret it should be a cause for concern.

"If an individual member of Oath Keepers disagrees with a Supreme Court ruling, Oath Keepers believe that they are entitled to not comply with that Supreme Court ruling because, as Oath Keepers would say, an unjust law is no law at all," said Sam Jackson, assistant professor in the College of Emergency Preparedness, Homeland Security and Cyber Security at the University at Albany. "That's really problematic to me and really, I think undercuts our understanding of the rule of law and ideas about the universal application of law."

During its 2021 legislative session, lawmakers in Washington state passed legislation that would require pre-hire background checks of all peace and corrections officers that [include inquiry into ties to extremist organizations](#). It would also [permit the state to deny, suspend or revoke certification](#) to officers who are affiliated with extremist groups.

However, Rahr says there will likely be debate over which groups qualify as "extremist." And, Washington's step toward regulating this issue appears to make it an outlier among states.

"Although this has become a more prevalent conversation in jurisdictions across the country, many still do not specifically prohibit membership in extremist groups," said Cameron McElhiney, director of training at The National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement. "They often get around the issue by relying on policies that prohibit behavior that would be considered detrimental to the department."

For Rahr, however, departments that fail to tackle this issue risk losing public trust.

"Cognitive science is very, very clear that personal beliefs impact perception, and your perception impacts your judgment. And so if an officer has a deeply held belief that is contrary to fair and equitable policing, that's going to create a problem," she said. "I think best practices would be to not hire [or] not allow certification of people who are actively involved in those groups."

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SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3220288/flu-strain-missing-covid-precautions/
GIST	<p>For the past year-and-a-half, people around the world have put on masks, stayed home, and diligently washed their hands to protect against COVID-19, but it appears that these precautions have also caused some major changes for another serious virus — the flu.</p> <p>While flu in general has been far less prominent around the world in the past year, one particular strain has especially been missing in action.</p> <p>The two types of flu that get people sick every fall and winter are influenza A and influenza B. In a recent study published in Nature Reviews Microbiology, scientists noted that one of the two main strains of influenza B has all but disappeared around the world in recent months.</p> <p>“What’s been really interesting, and what this study is looking at, is that we’ve only had a few reports of a very specific subtype of influenza B since 2021, and that really raises the question about whether this type of influenza could be extinct or could be going extinct,” explained Dr. Seth Cohen, medical director of Infection Prevention at UW Medical Center.</p> <p>Cohen said that if that strain is gone, it would bode well for future flu vaccines. Only four strains are currently used in the annual vaccine — two influenza A strains and two influenza B strains, chosen based on scientists’ best guesses of which strains will be dominant that year. Having one fewer strain to worry about would free up space for others.</p> <p>“If we had more room ... if you take away one of those influenza B strains, we could put in something else, like another influenza A strain, to help prevent other types of flu that could cause severe infection,” Cohen said.</p> <p>Eventually, researchers hope to have one mRNA “super vaccine” that would protect against every single flu strain.</p> <p>“The holy grail of flu vaccines would be to develop a universal flu vaccine that would be a single dose that protects against all known strains of influenza ... and might even be longer lasting, so people wouldn’t have to get their seasonal flu shot,” Cohen said.</p> <p>Whether or not the “missing” strain of influenza B is gone for good, the decrease in cases is strong evidence for the benefits of wearing masks, staying socially distant, and taking other similar precautions worldwide.</p> <p>“It really goes to show how powerful a lot of these public health interventions are that we have not done previously on a large scale,” Cohen said. “One of the few silver linings to come out of COVID is we’ve seen a decrease in a number of respiratory viruses, including influenza.”</p> <p>Cohen expects that even after the coronavirus pandemic is behind us, some people will continue to wear masks in the fall and winter.</p> <p>“Certainly in hospitals, it’s really changed the way we think about respiratory viral season,” Cohen said. “For us in health care, it’s hard to imagine going back to a respiratory viral season where people are not masked.”</p> <p>He encourages people to keep up with the masking in a future non-COVID era, noting that there are no downsides to protecting oneself against the seasonal bugs. As long as you get your annual flu shot, he said, your immune system will still build up a strong response without having to go through the annoyance and risk of getting sick.</p> <p>And this year especially, as hospitals remain near full capacity and short on staff — and as health officials nervously eye the plateau in COVID cases, worried we could see another surge — Cohen said it is vital for people to get their flu shot to help keep as many people out of hospitals as possible.</p>

	<p>“The vaccines are terrific at preventing infection, but what they’re really designed to do is keep people out of the hospital and keep people from dying. And so for health care workers, we directly see the impacts of these vaccines in our communities,” he said. “If people can get vaccinated for COVID and for influenza, to us that means we’re keeping people out of the hospital and making sure we have beds available to care for people who really need to be hospitalized.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 Southeast coastal storm ‘king tide’ flooding
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2021/11/04/southeast-coastal-flooding-storm-kingtide/
GIST	<p>A developing storm system will combine with high astronomical tides to bring areas of serious coastal flooding to the shoreline of Georgia, eastern Florida and South Carolina late Friday and into the weekend. Persistent onshore flow brought by gusty easterly winds will pile water up against the coastline, threatening vulnerable property and causing widespread splashover.</p> <p>Coastal flood watches stretch from the Treasure Coast north into southeast Georgia, and advisories, watches and warnings will “definitely” be expanded northward into South Carolina, according to the National Weather Service.</p> <p>Due to the astronomical high tides, some minor coastal flooding has already been observed around Charleston, well ahead of the storm.</p> <p>When the storm makes it closest approach, the National Weather Service in Jacksonville, Fla., is calling for water levels 2.5 to 3.5 feet above normally dry ground at high tide Saturday morning.</p> <p>“Numerous roads may be closed,” it wrote, noting that “homes, businesses and some critical infrastructure may be inundated.” There’s also a high rip current risk.</p> <p>It comes barely a week after an inauspiciously placed storm over the Appalachians spurred near-record coastal flooding in parts of the Mid-Atlantic. In Annapolis and Alexandria, Va., waters rose to their highest level since 2003.</p> <p>Triple trouble for tidal concerns</p> <p>Now a new storm is materializing in the Gulf of Mexico and will intensify east of the Florida Peninsula as it drifts north Friday evening. Low-pressure systems in the Northern Hemisphere spin counterclockwise, meaning an influx of warm, moist air will buffet the coast north of the low’s center. That channel of onshore winds will induce coastal flooding.</p> <p>The timing is less than ideal, since we’re approaching the peak of November “king tides,” which will be most elevated through Tuesday.</p> <p>A king tide describes a tide made even more extreme thanks to the positions of the sun and moon, combined with the interactions of various weather systems. Earth is nearing perihelion, or its closest pass by the sun, while the moon is also approaching perigee, meaning it’s nearest to us in its 27.3 day orbit. The result is more gravitational tug on the waters, resulting in higher tides.</p> <p>The location of high pressure also helps amplify easterly winds, which boosts tides even more. September, October and November often feature action-tier flooding in vulnerable places such as Miami and Charleston, S.C., on otherwise fair weather days with blue skies. Climate change and sea level rise are making that flooding more frequent and severe. Miami, for instance, has seen a 12-fold increase in action-tier flooding since only the mid-1990s.</p> <p>Add a coastal storm into the mix, and it comes as no surprise that flooding is expected.</p> <p>What to expect</p>

Low pressure will form along a cold front in the eastern Gulf of Mexico west of the Florida Straits on Friday. It will pass over central Florida on Friday night with showers and a few thunderstorms before emerging north of the Bahamas overnight into Saturday morning.

The low will intensify during the day Saturday, drawing in more air. In the process, surface winds will strengthen. The unusual setup will yield a corridor of 30 to 40 mph easterly or northeasterly wind gusts from roughly Jacksonville to the Outer Banks, N.C. A few gusts approaching 50 mph can't be ruled out.

That will help amplify tidal flooding and bring a storm surge of several feet that could inundate low-lying areas near the coast.

Fort Pulaski, east of Savannah, Ga., is forecast to see peak water levels reach major flood stage Saturday. The predicted level would be fourth highest on record and comparable to an October 1947 Category 2 hurricane, according to Weather.com.

Moderate to major coastal flooding is anticipated around Charleston between Friday and Sunday, with Saturday's peak water level potentially ranking in the top 10 highest on record. About two feet of inundation is possible.

Weather models also depict showers and downpours, relegated mainly to the immediate coastline.

"If showers occur around/at the time of high tide, any future or ongoing flooding could be exacerbated," wrote the National Weather Service in Charleston, S.C. Inland rainfall would drain toward the coast, funneling into rivers that will already be backed up. Most of the rain should stay off the coast, with the exception of in north Florida, where three to five inches is possible.

By the latter half of Saturday, the storm should be heading past the Outer Banks, where minor coastal flood is anticipated, as it makes a run out to sea. Tides may remain elevated and seas choppy through the weekend, however. Waves just offshore may build to 20 to 30 feet tall.

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HEADLINE	11/04 Seattle's next mayor first Asian American
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/local/politics/article/bruce-harrell-is-next-mayor-of-seattle-nov-2021-16590085.php
GIST	<p>Bruce Harrell will become Seattle's next mayor, making him the first Asian American to ever be elected to that office.</p> <p>His opponent, M. Lorena González, conceded defeat Thursday.</p> <p>"With today's ballot drop, it's clear that Bruce Harrell will be the next Mayor of Seattle," she tweeted. "Earlier, I called him to congratulate him on a hard-fought race and wished him much luck in his efforts to make progress on the challenges Seattle faces."</p> <p>As more ballots from Tuesday's general election were counted Thursday, Harrell — the former city council president — solidified his lead over González, the current council president. Thursday's results showed Harrell winning 62% of the vote. The Associated Press called the race Thursday afternoon.</p> <p>There are roughly 67,000 ballots left to be counted from the City of Seattle. González would have to win just under 48,000 of them — roughly 70% of them — to win, making a comeback improbable but not impossible.</p> <p>Harrell jumped out to an early lead Tuesday after preliminary results showed him beating González by nearly 30 points.</p> <p>"Thank you, Seattle! These results prove that we can and will change the narrative in this city by coming</p>

together, uniting around our shared values, and doing the work to move Seattle forward,” Harrell tweeted early Wednesday. “I can’t wait to get to started.”

There are turbulent times ahead for Harrell. Seattle is still reeling from the economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic — the city was the first U.S. epicenter — and has been slow to heal from last year’s summer of raucous Black Lives Matter protests following the murder of George Floyd.

Harrell’s predecessor, Mayor Jenny Durkan, faced severe criticism from the political right and left over her handling of the two issues, which lead to her decision to not seek reelection after serving only one term.

Harrell, a moderate from Seattle’s Centrist District, based much of his bid on addressing homelessness. A number of encampments proliferated in the city’s streets and parks last year after homeless shelters were shuttered amid the pandemic. He’s promised to utilize local and federal resources to get people off the streets and into stable housing with on-site services.

He also drew sharp contrast between himself and his opponent on the issue of policing. He repeatedly reminded voters that he was not on the Seattle City Council last year when the body — which included González — vowed to cut the city’s police budget in half. He took a goldilocks approach to the issue, acknowledging that an armed police response to 911 calls isn’t always necessary but maintained that the department needs to be adequately staffed in order to make residents feel safe.

So far, Harrell’s victory over González — who centered her candidacy around a tax on big businesses and the wealthy — does not look like an outlier in this year’s local elections.

Each of the city’s progressive candidates are attempting to claw their way back from huge deficits against opponents who land further right on the political spectrum. Ann Davison, who ran for Lt. Governor last year as a Republican, is ahead of abolitionist candidate Nicole Thomas-Kennedy by 11 points in the race for Seattle City Attorney. Meanwhile, Fremont Brewing co-founder Sara Nelson is enjoying a healthy 15-point lead over attorney and nonprofit director Nikkita Oliver as the two vie for a vacant Seattle City Council seat.

General election turnout the year after a presidential election is historically low. In 2017, just 43% of King County voters and about half of Seattle voters turned in ballots.

It looks like turnout for this year is going to be eerily similar. As of Thursday, county election data showed that 43% of King County voters and just over half of Seattle voters had turned in ballots. Election officials forecasted 46% turnout for the election.

Harrell, who graduated from Garfield High School in Seattle as his class’ valedictorian, earned a bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of Washington. While there, he played inside linebacker for the Huskies and helped the team to a Rose Bowl win in 1978. He chose to go to law school instead of playing in the National Football League, and earned his juris doctorate from UW in 1984.

After stints in the technology, telecommunications and law fields, Harrell was elected to the Seattle City Council in 2007. He served on the council for 11 years — including four years as council president — before retiring in 2019. He briefly served as Seattle’s acting mayor after former Mayor Ed Murray resigned amid a sex-abuse scandal.

While a councilmember, he supported initiatives to mandate police body cameras in Seattle; regulate the use of drones and other surveillance measures by police; prohibit employers from requiring applicants to admit whether they have a criminal record on job applications; and bring back the Seattle Supersonics.

Harrell is the son of a black father and Japanese mother. He is 63 years old.

HEADLINE	11/04 Ex-WSU coach appeals firing over vaccine
SOURCE	https://www.seattlepi.com/sports/article/Former-Washington-State-coach-appeals-firing-over-16593564.php
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — Attorneys for former Washington State coach Nick Rolovich sent a letter to the university appealing his firing for refusing to get the coronavirus vaccine, contending school officials did not conduct a fair process to determine whether he should receive a religious exemption to a state mandate that all state employees must be vaccinated.</p> <p>Attorneys Brian Fahling and Eric Kniffen's letter to athletic director Pat Chun lays out their appeal of Rolovich's firing for just cause.</p> <p>The letter says Chun overturned a decision by the university's Human Resource Services to grant Rolovich a religious exemption to the vaccination mandate. Rolovich has said he is Catholic. The Catholic Church has not prohibited vaccinations against COVID-19.</p> <p>“This is your opportunity to step back, re-examine your illegal and unconstitutional conduct, and adopt a different posture toward Coach Rolovich before you and the university are forced to defend your conduct in the context of a federal court civil rights action,” the letter said.</p> <p>Fahling has said Rolovich intends to file a lawsuit over his firing.</p> <p>Chun did not immediately return messages left by telephone and email Thursday. A university spokesman said the school would have no comment on the letter.</p> <p>Rolovich completed his application for a religious exemption on Sept. 28. School officials notified Chun on Oct. 6 that Rolovich was entitled to a religious exemption and that the athletic department needed to decide whether accommodations could be made for Rolovich to safely continue working as head coach, the letter contends.</p> <p>On Oct. 13, the athletic department responded to the Human Resource Services that it could not safely accommodate Rolovich, the letter said.</p> <p>Rolovich and four of his assistants were fired on Oct. 18. Rolovich was the first major college coach to lose his job over his vaccination status.</p> <p>Defensive coordinator Jake Dickert was elevated to acting coach and the Cougars (5-4) have gone 1-1 since Rolovich was fired. They remain in contention for the Pac-12 North title and a bowl game.</p> <p>Rolovich, 42, was the highest-paid state employee with an annual salary of more than \$3 million. He was fired for cause, which means the university does not have to honor the rest of his contract.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 Cold-snap Seattle housing market
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/real-estate/what-seattle-area-homebuyers-will-face-this-fall-you-might-want-to-warm-up/
GIST	<p>The fall months brought a cold snap to Seattle’s housing market.</p> <p>Prices in King County are essentially flat. Fewer new homes are listed for sale, and fewer home shoppers are taking the plunge. That’s welcome news for some buyers still on the hunt, who are finding occasional price drops and fewer bidding wars.</p> <p>But it’s not all so rosy.</p> <p>The number of new listings in King County plunged from September to October and those listings were quickly snapped up before the month was out, putting the squeeze on buyers who are still shopping.</p>

For would-be homebuyers, the selection of homes is more limited than this time of year before the pandemic. King County saw 65% fewer active listings at the end of October than the same time in 2019. And at this time two years ago, it would have taken just over a month and a half to sell all the homes available, compared to less than two weeks now. Pierce and Snohomish counties saw similar trends.

“The inventory that was already low, I’m definitely feeling it dropping even more. And the buyer demand does not feel like it’s dropping,” said Heather Maddox, a Windermere agent based in Renton.

Median single-family home prices are still up by double-digit percentages compared to the same time in 2020 or 2019. In King County, the median home sold in October for \$824,270, up 10.6% from October 2020.

In Snohomish County, the median home sold for \$695,000, up 19.8%. In Pierce County, the median home sold for \$520,000, up 20.9%. Kitsap, Thurston and Whatcom counties all saw year-over-year increases between 16% and 20%.

Prices were roughly level from September to October, dipping less than two-tenths of a percent in King County. In Pierce and Snohomish counties, prices ticked up about 3% after dropping roughly the same amount the month before.

In Seattle, the median home sold for \$850,000, up about 6.2% from a year earlier. On the Eastside, the median home sold for about \$1.4 million, up 30% from a year earlier. In Tacoma, the \$615,000 median price in North Tacoma was up 24.7% compared to last year and the \$440,000 median price in Central Tacoma was up 23.9%.

This week, Maddox wrote an offer for a client on a two-bedroom house in Rainier Beach listed at \$615,000. The home drew five competing offers and went pending in eight days. Maddox said her client lost out to buyers willing to pay more and [waive more protections](#).

Competition, even among two or three buyers, can drive prices up and push buyers to waive protections like their inspection contingency.

“I’m just telling buyers to get in now. It’s not going to hurt you to start your search early,” Maddox said. “But jumping in in February is like throwing yourself in front of a truck or running with the bulls or something. You might want to warm up.”

Still, some buyers are finding deals.

Redfin agent Malia Vassar recently worked with a couple who had been searching for a home in the Green Lake area for 11 months. This week, they closed on a \$996,000 three-bedroom house they secured at the list price without competing against other offers.

“Now is the chance to get lucky,” Vassar said.

The seasonal cooling off of prices in the Seattle area [matches national trends](#), but the market is still drawing people looking to turn a profit.

Nationwide, all-cash buys are up, and the share of institutional investors buying homes, about 7%, is the highest level since early 2014, according to ATTOM Data Solutions. Meanwhile, the share using Federal Housing Administration loans, which offer [low down payments for middle-class buyers, is the](#) lowest since late 2007 at about 8%.

For those who already own homes in Western Washington, the potential financial gains have skyrocketed since the years following the Great Recession.

In a measure of profit margins — the difference between the price a home sells for and the price it last sold for — Bellingham ranked second in the nation. The margin there increased from 69.5% at this time last year to nearly 106% this year, according to ATTOM.

The Bellingham area has seen an influx of buyers from Seattle as the pandemic allowed white-collar workers to abandon their office commutes and work from home.

Even owners who stand to make large gains selling their homes can worry about finding another house to buy, leading them to hold off on selling.

“No one wants to become a buyer right now,” Vassar said.

In the market for condos, prices were roughly stagnant, ticking up 1.8% in King County from September to October. Fewer condos were listed in October than in September and fewer new sales took place in King County.

The median condo in Seattle sold for \$525,000 last month, up 5.6% from last October. On the Eastside, the median condo sold for \$550,500, down 11.2%.

Condo sales are down compared to last year, but up from the same time in 2018 and 2019, likely due in part to new construction in recent years. In Seattle, 11 new condo developments have sold about 59% of their units, according to an analysis from Dean Jones, owner of a local Realogics Sotheby’s International Realty affiliate. Two projects under construction are set to open in 2023 and 2024.

The condo market floundered earlier in the pandemic, as buyers looked for more space and worried less about being close to their offices. Earlier this year, the market stabilized. While some condo shoppers are [seeking out luxury towers](#), others are looking for a more affordable door into homeownership.

With the constant climb of single-family home prices, “it makes sense that affordable housing options for purchase are increasingly being limited to condominium flats,” Jones said in an email. “Town homes and single-family homes especially are asset classes that are simply out of reach for many.”

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HEADLINE	11/03 Voters reject scaled-back policing
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/03/us/police-reform-minneapolis-election.html?action=click&module=Well&pgtype=Homepage&section=US%20News
GIST	<p>MINNEAPOLIS — After a Minneapolis police officer murdered George Floyd last year, protesters marched across the country demanding sweeping change to law enforcement. But given the opportunity Tuesday to dismantle their city’s troubled Police Department and replace it with something new, Minneapolis voters said no.</p> <p>The results in Minneapolis, an overwhelmingly Democratic city, as well as returns in local races from Long Island to Seattle, suggested that voters saw an enduring need for policing even as they supported some incremental changes. In an election season that played out amid a national rise in homicides, Americans across racial and geographic lines rejected the most far-reaching calls for reinventing law enforcement and, in many cases, elected candidates who backed the current policing structure.</p> <p>“I do want to see some changes,” said Deborah Diggins, 60, a social worker in Minneapolis who said she supported having mental health workers respond to more emergency calls. “But most certainly I do not want to see them defund the Police Department — in no form or fashion. We need policemen.”</p> <p>In Seattle, where a majority of the City Council had endorsed cutting the police budget by half, Bruce Harrell, a candidate who favors adding police officers, was far ahead in the city’s mayoral race with counting still underway. In New York City, Eric Adams, a former police captain who won the Democratic primary this year after rejecting the defund-the-police movement and emphasizing the role of the police in</p>

public safety, [sailed to election](#). And in Minneapolis, Mayor Jacob Frey, who oversaw the city when Mr. Floyd was killed and was heckled by demonstrators after bucking calls to abolish the Police Department, [decisively won a second term](#). Some of his opponents ran on replacing the Police Department.

“All of the work around safety and accountability is complex — none of it you can fix with a hashtag or a slogan,” said Mr. Frey, who pledged to improve the existing Police Department during his victory speech on Wednesday.

Republican candidates running on explicitly “Back the Blue” platforms won or were leading in some closely contested races, including for county executive and prosecutor posts on New York’s politically diverse [Long Island](#). But the debate in many cities over how far to go in reimagining policing played out largely among different factions of Democrats.

In Atlanta, where homicides are up, [policing defined much of this year’s mayoral election](#). Officials were still tallying the votes on Wednesday but named as the top vote-getter in a preliminary election Felicia Moore, who has promised to hire more police officers while also making the department more transparent and accountable. In Buffalo, Mayor Byron W. Brown, a moderate Democrat, appeared on track to [win another term](#) after waging a write-in campaign against a democratic socialist, India Walton, whom he accused of planning to cut police jobs.

Even as more moderate candidates prevailed, voters in many places expressed their continuing concerns about police conduct and the need for more accountability. In Cleveland, for instance, residents voted to expand civilian oversight of the police and elected a mayoral candidate, Justin Bibb, who positioned himself as a progressive committed to improving law enforcement. In Austin, Texas, voters rejected a ballot measure that would have required the city to hire hundreds more officers, despite a campaign by supporters that emphasized a sharp rise in homicides.

“I really thought people would buy into a lot of the fearmongering that came from the other side,” said Chas Moore, executive director of the Austin Justice Coalition, which opposed the measure.

But the results in Minneapolis, where a proposed amendment would have replaced the Police Department with a new agency focused on public health, showed how the strongly held views that policing needs to change clashed with concerns about rising gun violence and homicides. The proposed safety agency in Minneapolis would have almost certainly still employed police officers, but the measure would have dismantled the existing system and eliminated minimum staffing requirements.

“The undeniable factor in that victory in Minneapolis — and I think it shows through in elections nationwide at every level — is a growing concern on the part of the electorate over the rising violent crime rate in the United States,” said Jim Pasco, the executive director of the National Fraternal Order of Police, a law enforcement union. “I believe, in terms of these draconian proposals to reduce or even eliminate police departments in this so-called defunding effort, that ship has sailed.”

[F.B.I. statistics showed](#) the steepest year-to-year homicide increase on record from 2019 to 2020, though killings remained below the levels seen in the 1990s and major crimes overall dropped about 5 percent last year.

Supporters of the Minneapolis amendment said that they were disappointed but that their campaign had succeeded in shifting the debate around policing, perhaps in a lasting way. That a large American city held an election on getting rid of its Police Department, and that [more than 40 percent of voters supported it](#), they said, showed how much the discourse had broadened since only a few years ago, when far narrower changes, such as requiring body cameras or tightening use-of-force policies, were hotly debated.

“We’re doing the work and people are not ready yet,” said Rashad Robinson of the Color of Change PAC, which supported the Minneapolis amendment. “I fundamentally believe that we are on the right track. We would have not even been part of the conversation a couple of years ago.”

When protests spread following the murder of Mr. Floyd last year, “defund the police” became a progressive slogan. Across the country, many police department budgets were cut. A veto-proof majority of the Minneapolis City Council [vowed to dismantle the police force](#), though some members [soon backtracked](#).

The conversation has shifted again as homicides rose, with killings in Minneapolis reaching levels not seen since the 1990s. “Defund the police” has become a potent Republican attack line, and a slogan that all but the most liberal Democrats now avoid. Some of the cities that cut police budgets last year have [now restored funding](#).

There have been some enduring changes to the current system, many with broad political support. Several cities, including Minneapolis, have invested more money in mental health services and in dispatching social workers to emergency calls. Officers in some places are no longer pulling people over for some minor offenses. And Minneapolis remains a place where liberal policies have found support: Even as voters chose not to get rid of their Police Department, they approved an amendment that would allow for rent control.

In Seattle, another liberal city that saw large, sometimes destructive protests in 2020, the Republican [candidate for city attorney](#), Ann Davison, was leading in the vote over an opponent who had posted messages about her hatred of the police and sought to abolish the criminal justice system as it exists.

In the mayor’s race, Mr. Harrell, a Democrat who had criticized the defund effort and was leading, said on Wednesday that voters wanted improvements in policing but also wanted a police force that could respond to crimes quickly and conduct thorough investigations. His push for more officers, he said, had clearly resonated.

“I think it was a major issue, perhaps a determinative factor,” Mr. Harrell said.

Still, Mr. Harrell said he was committed to changes to policing. He said he would seek, for instance, to have every sworn officer watch video of Mr. Floyd’s murder and sign a letter stating that the inhumane treatment of people would not be tolerated in Seattle.

In Minneapolis, the city where the defund movement gained national prominence after Mr. Floyd’s murder and where many still speak with disgust about how their neighborhoods are patrolled, residents said they saw the election results as a reflection of their daily concerns. The ballot language contained few specifics about the proposed public safety agency, and residents said getting rid of the Police Department without a clearer alternative was a risk they could not take at a time when homicides have risen.

“For Black residents of Minneapolis, it’s not about politics,” said Nekima Levy Armstrong, a civil rights lawyer who has long protested police violence, but who opposed the amendment to replace the department. “It’s about our day-to-day realities of too often feeling unsafe with the things that are unfolding. Hearing the stories of children being shot and killed, and meeting the families of those children.”

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HEADLINE	11/04 Reframing climate change as a health crisis
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/04/climate/public-health-climate-change.html
GIST	<p>For the first time at a major United Nations climate conference, human health is emerging as a leading issue, a reframing that brings climate change’s far-reaching and long-lasting effects to the forefront.</p> <p>Although health has been addressed at conferences going back to the first U.N. environmental summit in 1992, never before has it held such a central role. The 2015 Paris accord, the global agreement among nations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, was billed foremost as a historic environmental moment.</p>

However, “the Paris Agreement is not an environmental treaty,” said Dr. Maria Neira, the director of the World Health Organization’s department on environment, climate change and health. “It is a basic public health treaty.”

There is a growing body of research showing that climate change is contributing to a wide range of health risks around the world. It is exacerbating heat waves, intensifying wildfires, heightening flood risks and worsening droughts. These are, in turn, increasing heat-related mortality, pregnancy complications and cardiovascular disease. And as with many things climate-related, the risks and harms are particularly severe in places that are the least able to respond.

There is also a cascade of indirect health consequences that threaten to unravel decades of progress on improving water quality and food security. Drier soil can contribute to malnutrition. Warming temperatures and changing humidity levels can expand habitats suitable to dengue- or malaria-carrying mosquitoes, lyme-carrying ticks, and the pathogens that cause diseases like cholera and Valley Fever.

At the same time, two years of grappling with the coronavirus pandemic has underscored to politicians the importance of health as a national and global priority.

For reasons like these, the health community has strategized that if it can make people the face of climate change — rather than traditional environmental icons, such as polar bears or forests — political leaders may be more inclined to take action.

In the months leading up to the Glasgow conference, known as COP26, the world’s leading public health organizations, medical journals and professional organizations [released a series of reports and editorials](#) placing health at the heart of the climate issue. One letter signed by organizations representing 47 million global health professionals declared the climate crisis “the single biggest health threat facing humanity.” The World Health Organization estimates that between 2030 and 2050, at least 250,000 additional deaths will occur every year as a result of climate change.

In one sign of the emphasis placed on health this year, 15 countries, including Ireland and Mozambique, have already made significant pledges to decarbonize their national health systems.

“This year represents a quantum leap in how health is being covered at COP,” said Josh Karliner, the international director of program and strategy at Health Care Without Harm, an organization that has worked to reduce the health care sector’s environmental footprint.

Around the world, health care providers have said that they are already seeing the effects of climate change on their patients, as well as on the ability of hospitals to continue providing care during extreme weather. At the same time, there has been a growing awareness of the health care sector’s own contribution to greenhouse gas emissions.

Difficulties providing care

Hospitals around the world have been hit hard by extreme weather and are increasingly grappling with the reality that they weren’t designed for the intensity of storms, heat and other challenges that are becoming more commonplace. Floods killed Covid patients at a hospital in Mexico. Hospitals in India suffered severe flooding. As wildfires burned on the West Coast, hospitals struggled to maintain their indoor air quality. A hurricane ripped the roof of a rural Louisiana hospital.

During the Pacific Northwest heat wave this summer, Dr. Jeremy Hess, a professor of emergency medicine at the University of Washington, was working in the emergency department at Harborview Medical Center, the highest-level trauma center for several states. Dr. Hess has worked in emergency departments during mass casualty events, but the heat wave stuck out.

“It was more sustained,” he said. “It was an environmental emergency that wasn’t stopping.”

For days, patients came in with third-degree burns on their feet from walking on hot asphalt, he said. Many succumbed to heat-related death before even making it to the hospital. Doctors scrambled to have body bags filled with ice on gurneys.

Hospitals across the region were stressed in other ways. Providence, a large health care organization in the West, had no spare beds at their emergency departments spanning the northern part of Washington state down to southern Oregon. One hospital closed its psychiatric unit to ensure there was adequate power in more critical parts of the building.

That week, [more than 1,000 heat-related emergency visits](#) were reported in the Pacific Northwest, compared with fewer than 10 visits during the same period in 2019. Researchers found that such an intensive heat wave would have been [virtually impossible](#) without the influence of human-caused climate change.

Doctors say they have also seen the health effects of a changing climate in their day-to-day interactions with patients.

For years, Dr. Renee Salas, an emergency medicine doctor at Massachusetts General Hospital, said that she has noticed allergy seasons are lasting longer, stressing her patients with asthma and lung diseases. She thought climate change may be behind it — and science has borne out her suspicions. [Studies have found](#) that since 1990 pollen seasons have not only become longer but also contain higher pollen concentrations, and that climate change is a driving factor.

“I think about climate change as a secondary diagnosis in my patients,” said Dr. Salas, a co-author of The Lancet Countdown, a report on climate change and health.

The health burdens are unlikely to be shared equally.

In September, a [report from the Environmental Protection Agency](#) found that although all Americans will be affected by climate change, minorities are likely to face more health risks. Black Americans, for instance, are 40 percent more likely to live in areas with the highest increases in mortality due to extreme temperature.

“The same vulnerable communities that were disproportionately hurt by Covid-19 are bearing disproportionate harm from climate change,” Dr. John Balbus, the interim director of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Climate Change and Health Equity, wrote in an email.

Hospitals as polluters

Meanwhile, there’s been growing recognition within the health industry of its own contributions to climate change.

It is estimated that the health care sector accounts for close to 5 percent of all global carbon dioxide emissions. Some of that comes from powering energy-intensive hospitals and clinics 24 hours a day, but the majority — an estimated 70 percent — is related to its supply chain and the energy required to produce, ship and dispose of the machines, pharmaceuticals and equipment used every day.

Over the past decade, 43,000 hospitals and health centers in 72 countries have signed on as members of the Global Green and Healthy Hospitals, a network of organizations aimed at reducing their environmental impact.

“It is a trend,” said Alison Santore, the chief advocacy and sustainability officer for Providence, the hospital chain, which is a member of the green-hospital group. “But it’s still the minority of hospitals when we look at the whole.”

Last year, in the midst of the pandemic, Providence pledged to go carbon negative by 2030, meaning that the company aims to remove more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than it adds.

Health care centers and hospitals are 2.5 times as energy intensive as other buildings. Rooms and hallways are filled with computers and machines. Many items in hospitals are single-use to prevent infection. It is estimated that hospitals produce between 29 and 43 pounds of waste per patient per day.

“We are called to heal, and yet we are hurting the environment,” Ms. Santore said.

So far, the transition has not been easy. Beth Schenk, a registered nurse and the executive director of environmental stewardship at Providence, said that meeting the company’s goals has required rethinking every aspect of their operations. In addition to adding solar panels to roofs and transitioning to low-flow water, they’ve taken out water-intensive lawns and redesigned surgical kits.

Even for the few hospitals that have made progress, significant obstacles remain. Clinica Biblica, a large hospital in San Jose, Costa Rica, achieved carbon neutrality by installing solar panels on its roof, purchasing carbon offsets, and otherwise relying on the country’s electric grid, which is powered by 99 percent renewable energy. But its commitment to becoming carbon neutral along its entire supply chain will be a major challenge when there is little transparency over [the greenhouse gas emissions of overseas suppliers](#) and waste disposal.

Many health care providers are also learning that greenhouse gases can be found where you least expect them. For instance, the main ingredients in essential medical tools like anesthetic gases and inhalers are actually potent greenhouse gases, like hydrofluorocarbons.

Despite their own efforts, though, health care leaders point out that it will be difficult for the industry to achieve carbon neutral goals without changes that are beyond their control, like the wider availability of renewable energy on the power grid.

Burning fossil fuels costs society \$5 trillion on treating chronic disease, and air pollution results in 7 million premature deaths each year, said Dr. Neira, adding that “society needs to put that in the balance.”

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HEADLINE	11/04 Germany sets daily virus case record
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/04/world/europe/germany-covid-surge-daily-case-record.html
GIST	<p>Germany recorded 33,949 new coronavirus cases over a 24-hour period on Wednesday, surpassing a record set in mid-December 2020, when the country was in the throes of its second Covid wave.</p> <p>During the same 24 hours last year, 165 people died of the disease.</p> <p>“We’re currently experiencing a pandemic of the unvaccinated,” Jens Spahn, the German health minister, said at a news conference on Wednesday.</p> <p>Only 67 percent of the population is fully inoculated, putting Germany behind other European Union members like Italy, Portugal and Spain, according to the Our World in Data project at the University of Oxford.</p> <p>And in the eastern and southern parts of Germany, where vaccine skepticism runs high, the inoculation rate is significantly lower than the national average.</p> <p>Vaccine refusal appears to have fueled infection hot spots in several districts this week, like in Dresden, in the east, and Munich, in the south, where the case rate has climbed to more than 500 cases per 100,000 people per week.</p> <p>The federal government, which, under Chancellor Angela Merkel’s leadership tightly managed the pandemic in its early stages, now appears to be struggling to control the situation. Mr. Spahn was</p>

	<p>scheduled to meet with state-level health ministers on Thursday and Friday in an effort to persuade them to reopen vaccination centers that were closed in the summer after demand waned.</p> <p>Elections to replace Ms. Merkel were held in September. Lawmakers who will likely form the new government announced last week that they would not extend a federal state of emergency that would allow Berlin to set Covid rules for the country, and will leave it to states to manage their own virus policies.</p> <p>On Friday, the government of the hard-hit eastern state of Saxony, which includes Dresden, is expected to pass laws that will require that visitors to public places, such as hairdressers and museums, show proof of vaccination or proof of past infection. On Wednesday, the Bavarian government, which includes Munich, also tightened its rules around testing and mask requirements.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 ICE officers file OSHA complaint
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/4/exclusive-its-death-trap-ice-officers-file-osh-co/
GIST	<p>The labor union for ICE officers has filed two workplace safety complaints about the Biden administration's handling of illegal immigrants and COVID-19 at the border, saying federal employees processing and releasing the migrants face conditions that amount to "a death trap."</p> <p>The complaints say many of the federal workers are contracting COVID-19.</p> <p>A Texas processing facility designed to hold fewer than 1,000 people at times has topped 4,000 per day. Employees have been falling ill after spending time in close quarters with illegal immigrants, who generally aren't tested for coronavirus infection, according to the complaints.</p> <p>The ICE employees work in a space right next to the sick ward, separated only by plastic sheeting. The facilities aren't sterilized after a COVID-19 diagnosis, the National ICE Council told the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.</p> <p>"Many ICE officers are testing positive for COVID, in addition to lung infections, viral infections, diarrhea, etc." the complaint charges.</p> <p>At the Anzalduas Port of Entry, officers share port-a-potties with migrants who have not yet been tested for infection, the second complaint says.</p> <p>Filing the complaints with OSHA was an attempt to use the Biden administration's regulatory machinery against itself. The ICE union hopes to force the government to follow some of the same standards in handling illegal immigrants that President Biden has attempted to impose on American workers and businesses.</p> <p>"It's an absolute act of desperation on our part," Chris Crane, president of the council, told The Washington Times. "We're just trying to save officers' lives down there."</p> <p>The National ICE Council, the bargaining unit for thousands of ICE officers, said OSHA replied with a request for names of people at the facilities who could shed light on the situation.</p> <p>OSHA confirmed it received the complaints and had open inspections at the Donna facility and the port of entry. The agency said it has six months to complete the inspection and no additional information will be available until afterward.</p> <p>In late October, after the OSHA complaints were filed, ICE officers' space was relocated inside the Donna facility. The officers no longer have to mingle with the busloads of migrants arriving.</p> <p>Still, Mr. Crane said, the rest of the unsafe conditions are unresolved.</p>

The presence of ICE officers at the two Texas locations is unusual. Border Patrol agents normally would handle all the duties at Donna, and Customs and Border Protection officers would work at the port. ICE would pick things up when custody has been transferred.

With migrants arriving in record numbers, however, the Homeland Security Department deployed ICE officers to help at CBP facilities.

The Donna facility was set up in February, early in a migrant surge that has plagued the Biden administration. The Border Patrol made about 98,000 arrests that month. It made more than 200,000 in July and more than 185,000 in September.

All of those arrests have to be processed through Border Patrol facilities, and roughly half are expelled back across the border under an emergency pandemic border shutdown order. The others are either caught and released or turned over to ICE or other federal agencies.

Homeland Security's handling of migrants with COVID-19 risks has been controversial from the start.

Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas' early claims that migrants were being tested turned out to be false. Facing criticism, the department reached agreements with local nonprofits and, in one case in Del Rio, Texas, signed a contract with a company to conduct testing.

That usually happens after Border Patrol processing and after government authorities determine whether to expel the migrants or allow them to stay in the U.S. — either in custody or in communities.

When migrants are turned over to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, ICE is supposed to be quarantining and testing.

If Border Patrol agents are catching and releasing the migrants at the border, the nonprofits do the testing. They also are supposed to handle quarantining, but they say they don't have the power to enforce quarantines if migrants want to leave.

One of the new OSHA complaints asserts that migrants released from the Donna facility who test positive for COVID-19 are turned over to the local Catholic Charities chapter, which shelters them in a hotel for three days before releasing them.

Mr. Mayorkas told Congress this fall that 20% of migrants were ill.

Mr. Crane said the lack of precautions for federal employees at the border contrasts with the Biden administration's moves to impose vaccine mandates on employees and contractors.

"It's infuriating to us to see the lies from this administration in that vaccine executive order that they are using all these 'science-based measures,' is how they're referred to, to save the lives of these federal employees, and down there [at Donna], science-based, common-sense-based protection is out the window," he said.

"This is why they won't let the media in there: because they don't want the media to see how extremely inhumane this is to the aliens and to our employees. It's a death trap," he said.

Mr. Biden's vaccine mandate applies to federal employees and contractors.

Declaring that "our patience is wearing thin," the president also ordered OSHA to come up with a mandated rule for corporations that employ more than 100 people. Those rules, revealed Thursday, offer employees a choice of either vaccination or weekly testing and mandatory masks.

The ICE Council isn't the only union to object to the administration's handling of operations.

	<p>The American Federation of Government Employees units that represent federal Bureau of Prisons workers nationally and in Miami filed a lawsuit arguing that the mandate violates their constitutional rights and short-cut procedural steps.</p> <p>The ICE Council is also part of AFGE.</p> <p>Their OSHA complaints say ICE has been made aware of the conditions its employees face.</p> <p>The Times reached out to the agency for a response. It's not clear how many ICE employees are fully vaccinated.</p> <p>Before their relocation last month, ICE officers at the Donna facility were assigned to a workspace next to the sick ward with no negative pressure rooms or other ways to seal off the sick area's ventilation.</p> <p>Every 45 minutes, newly arrived migrants were marched through the ICE officers' workspace, the complaint said.</p> <p>In addition to COVID-19 risks, the two OSHA complaints cite water leaking under the walls and running over electrical conduits.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 China upholds Iran regime by oil purchases
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/4/china-upholding-iranian-regime-oil-purchases/
GIST	<p>Chinese purchases of Iranian oil have steadily increased since President Biden arrived in office, with Beijing's blatant flouting of U.S. sanctions on the Islamic republic providing an economic lifeline to hard-liners in Tehran.</p> <p>The White House has come under increasing criticism for tolerating Beijing's purchases, which analysts say amount to indirect Chinese support for Iran's nuclear weapons program, as well as Tehran's militant posturing and rejections of U.S. and European attempts to restore the 2015 Obama-era nuclear deal.</p> <p>Talks on reviving the nuclear deal have stalled but will resume Nov. 29 in Vienna, European Union officials announced this week. It is unclear whether Washington and Tehran can move closer to resuscitating the agreement. Covert Chinese support for Iran's economy could make hard-line Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi even less motivated to negotiate.</p> <p>At a moment when the Iranian government and military would otherwise be scrambling in the face of U.S. sanctions, China's flouting of the measures is "the one thing that's keeping the Iranian regime afloat," said Daniel Roth, research director at the bipartisan advocacy group United Against Nuclear Iran, which tracks Iranian crude oil purchases around the world.</p> <p>"Without its oil revenues from China, the regime can't export its terrorism across the region and into Europe. It doesn't have the extra funds to pursue its illicit nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles or its drone warfare programs," Mr. Roth said in an interview this week.</p> <p>China was one of six international parties to the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran and is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. Still, Mr. Roth said, Beijing seems unconcerned that the Islamist government in Tehran is now advancing its nuclear activities far beyond limits set by the 2015 nuclear deal, as well as previous U.N. Security Council curbs.</p> <p>Tehran says it has not been bound by the restrictions since President Trump repudiated the deal in 2018 and reimposed sanctions on Iran and its foreign trading partners.</p>

“Does China actually care about Iran getting a nuclear weapon? I don’t think they’re particularly bothered by this question right now,” Mr. Roth said. “If China had to choose between stopping Iran [from] getting a nuclear weapon or maintaining Iranian oil supplies, China would choose the latter every time.”

Data compiled by United Against Nuclear Iran shows that nearly 1 million barrels per day of Iranian crude reached China in March and April. The volume has dipped in more recent months, to 586,000 barrels per day in October. Mr. Roth predicts the number will rise as winter energy needs increase.

The purchases have drawn scrutiny in national security circles since 2018, when Mr. Trump withdrew the United States from the multinational accord that gave Iran billions of dollars worth of sanctions relief in exchange for limits on the Islamic republic’s nuclear program.

The Trump administration attempted to uphold a global embargo on Iranian crude oil, the country’s main export and biggest earner of foreign currency. The embargo was part of a maximum pressure campaign aimed at halting Tehran’s ballistic missile program and support of militant proxies in Iraq, Yemen, Lebanon and Syria, which were purposely left out of the 2015 deal.

Despite criticism of the Trump administration, the international community broadly complied with the oil embargo. Even China cut most of its purchases of Iranian crude by late 2019 and early 2020. Only about 11,640 barrels per day moved between Iran and China in February 2020, according to United Against Nuclear Iran.

As the 2020 U.S. presidential election approached, Beijing began increasing its purchases.

National security sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity told The Washington Times that they believe Chinese officials calculated that the U.S. would not punish Beijing over the purchases during the period of domestic political uncertainty.

Beijing tripled its purchases of Iranian crude during the months immediately after the election, when it became clear that the Biden administration would not deter such activity.

The White House declined to comment when pressed this week by The Times on whether the administration is considering more sanctions, such as “secondary” sanctions, on certain Chinese entities to pressure Beijing into halting its purchases from Iran.

A State Department spokesperson suggested that the administration is trying to convince Tehran that Washington is prepared to ease sanctions and rejoin the nuclear accord, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, if Iran comes back into compliance with the deal.

Source of consternation

China’s decision to purchase Iranian crude is a source of consternation inside the administration. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan and Secretary of State Antony Blinken raised the issue in March during their first face-to-face talks with Chinese counterparts. The meeting, held in Alaska, was rife with tension and disagreements on multiple fronts.

“Our discussions in Anchorage included our concerns about [China’s] purchases of Iranian oil, as well as other sanctions enforcement issues,” a senior administration official told The Times on the condition of anonymity at the time.

Reuters reported that Deputy Secretary of State Wendy R. Sherman raised the issue when she visited China in July.

Some analysts have speculated privately that the White House hopes Iranian officials understand that its tolerance of China’s oil purchases is meant as encouragement to accept Mr. Biden’s invitation to rejoin the nuclear deal.

However, the financial lifeline from Beijing to Tehran has seemed to only embolden Iran's resistance to the Biden administration's diplomatic and economic overtures. Biden administration officials acknowledge that they are exploring options if they can't salvage the nuclear deal.

For months, Iran has refused to participate in any nuclear talks with U.S. officials present. Instead, it has engaged in "indirect" talks with officials from the other nations that were party to the 2015 deal: the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Russia and China.

On Wednesday, Iran signaled for the first time since Mr. Biden came to office that it would engage in talks with U.S. officials in Vienna at the end of this month. Announcing the development via Twitter, Iran's chief negotiator, Ali Bagheri Kani, said the goal of the talks will be the "removal of unlawful and inhumane sanctions" that the U.S. has imposed on Iran.

Republicans accuse Mr. Biden of looking the other way on the Chinese-Iranian economic lifeline in a bid to keep the 2015 deal from collapsing altogether.

"Every barrel of Iranian oil offloaded in Chinese ports is a violation of sanctions the United States put in place to starve revenue from Iranian terror and its nuclear program," Nikki Haley, a former ambassador to the United Nations, wrote in an opinion piece for The Washington Post last month. "Yet the Biden administration leaves Chinese firms unpunished for doing business with the ayatollahs."

Mr. Biden, she said, "may prefer negotiations, but they have only emboldened those who wish America ill."

Some analysts say the Biden administration has undercut its own strategy by failing to uphold U.S. pressure on Iran.

Mark Dubowitz, a sanctions expert focused on Iran at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, said that "no strategy against the Islamic Republic of Iran can be effective without sustained coercive pressure."

"Going back in time, the situation is reminiscent of Ronald Reagan's moment in history, when he came to believe that coercive measures would work to exploit Moscow's weaknesses and help hasten the Soviet regime's collapse," Mr. Dubowitz wrote in an analysis published in September by The Jerusalem Strategic Tribune.

Mr. Dubowitz said Iran had begun "enriching uranium at 60%, manufacturing uranium metal, accumulating large stockpiles of fissile material, testing more advanced centrifuges, and stonewalling the International Atomic Energy Agency's inquiries about nuclear-related activities."

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HEADLINE	11/04 Navy fires senior leaders over sub collision
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2021/nov/4/uss-connecticut-submarine-top-officers-fired-after/
GIST	<p>The three senior leaders of a nuclear-powered U.S. Navy submarine were fired following the investigation into an underwater collision in the South China Sea, Navy officials said Thursday.</p> <p>The commander, executive officer and senior enlisted sailor of the USS Connecticut were removed from their positions after the Seawolf-class fast-attack submarine struck what Navy investigators called an "uncharted seamount" Oct. 2 while operating in international waters in the Indo-Pacific region, officials said.</p> <p>Vice Admiral Karl Thomas, Commander of the 7th Fleet, ordered the relief of Commander Cameron Aljilani, Lt. Cmdr. Patrick Cashin and Master Chief Cory Rodgers due to a "loss of confidence."</p>

	<p>The commander in his review “determined [that] sound judgment, prudent decision-making, and adherence to required procedures in navigation planning, watch team execution and risk management could have prevented the incident,” Navy officials said in a statement.</p> <p>The submarine is still in Guam where the damage is being assessed. It will then return to its homeport of Bremerton, Washington, for repairs. The nuclear reactor aboard the submarine wasn’t damaged in the collision, Navy officials said, but 11 members of the crew suffered mild-to-moderate injuries.</p> <p>Capt. John Witte will assume duties as the submarine’s interim commanding officer. Commander Joe Sammur will be the second-in-command while Command Master Chief Paul Walters will assume command as the senior enlisted leader, known as the chief of the boat.</p> <p>China’s state-controlled media have seized on the incident, questioning what the sub was doing and accusing the Pentagon of a cover-up. A defense spokesman in Beijing said the U.S. “has the responsibility and obligation” to elaborate on the circumstances of the incident.</p> <p>The collision is merely the latest in what has been a series of events intended to “stir up trouble” in the South China Sea, such as the frequent passages by U.S. Navy warships through the disputed Taiwan Straits, Senior Col. Tan Keifei told reporters in Beijing.</p> <p>“We believe that the above-mentioned actions of the United States are bound to affect the navigation safety in the South China Sea, bring about serious concern and anxiety among countries along the South China Sea, and pose serious threat and risk to regional peace and stability,” he said in a statement released after the collision.</p> <p>Chinese officials accused the U.S. of deliberately delaying and concealing details of the incident.</p> <p>“Such irresponsible and secretive practice, lacking transparency, could easily lead to misunderstanding and miscalculation,” Col. Tan said. “China and countries around the South China Sea have no choice but to question the truth and the U.S. side’s intention.”</p> <p>The U.S. sub was in its fifth month of a deployment when it collided with the seamount, the Navy Times reported. The incident follows on a string of collisions and fatal accidents that have plagued the Navy in recent years and sparked calls on Capitol Hill for reforms, including deadly collisions by the USS Fitzgerald and USS John McCain in 2017 and the 2020 arson fire that completely destroyed the USS Bonhomme Richard.</p> <p>The Navy and the Marine Corps both were given “marginal” ratings in the most recent annual survey by the conservative Heritage Foundation of the military capability and readiness of the country’s military services.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/05 Study: ‘luxury carbon consumption’ of top 1%
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/05/carbon-top-1-percent-could-jeopardise-1point5c-global-heating-limit
GIST	<p>The carbon dioxide emissions of the richest 1% of humanity are on track to be 30 times greater than what is compatible with keeping global heating below 1.5C, new research warns, as scientists urge governments to “constrain luxury carbon consumption” of private jets, megayachts and space travel.</p> <p>In keeping with the Paris climate goals, every person on Earth needs to reduce their CO₂ emissions to an average of 2.3 tonnes by 2030, about half the average of today.</p> <p>The richest 1% – which is a population smaller than Germany – are on track to be releasing 70 tonnes of CO₂ per person a year if current consumption continues, according to the study. In total they will account</p>

for 16% of total emissions by 2030, up from 13% of emissions in 1990. Meanwhile, the poorest 50% will be releasing an average of one tonne of CO₂ annually.

“A tiny elite appear to have a free pass to pollute,” said Nafkote Dabi, climate policy lead at Oxfam, which commissioned the study by the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP) and the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI). “Their oversized emissions are fuelling extreme weather around the world and jeopardising the international goal of limiting global heating,” she said.

The research comes as global leaders gather in Cop26 to discuss ways to curb emissions and keep the 1.5C target on the table, with a number of delegates arriving at the climate conference by private jet, including [Boris Johnson](#), Prince Charles and Jeff Bezos. The charity is urging the richest citizens to speed up action on global heating by cutting their own CO₂ emissions in line with Paris targets, and using their influence and financial backing to drive a green economy.

Jamie Livingstone, the head of Oxfam Scotland, said [Cop26](#) was a “moment of truth in the fight against climate change”. He said: “Global leaders must agree ways to curb excessive emissions and limit global heating and they must do it here and now in Glasgow. Delay costs lives.”

Earlier this year Bezos went to space in his New Shepard rocket, Sir Richard Branson went to the edge of space in his Virgin Galactic Rocket and Elon Musk’s company promises to take humans to Mars. The emissions from a single 11-minute space flight amount to at least 75 tonnes, which [would exceed the lifetime emissions](#) of one of the poorest billion people on Earth.

The paper shows that the fight to keep 1.5C within reach is not being hampered by the consumption of most people on the planet, but by the excessive emissions of the world’s richest citizens, said Tim Gore, author of the briefing and head of the low-CO₂ and circular economy programme at the IEEP.

Even the total emissions produced by the richest 10% could be sufficient to exceed the amount allocated for keeping within the 1.5C targets by 2030 – regardless of what the other 90% of the population does.

Gore said: “To close the emissions gap by 2030, it is necessary for governments to target measures at their richest, highest emitters – the climate and inequality crises should be tackled together. That includes both measures to constrain luxury carbon consumption like megayachts, private jets and space travel, and to curb climate-intensive investments like stock-holdings in fossil fuel industries.”

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HEADLINE	11/05 Trouble? China’s \$5 trillion housing bubble
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/05/speculation-nation-can-xi-jinpings-property-tax-deflate-chinas-housing-bubble
GIST	<p>Analysis: President faces an uphill battle to undo a system that has led to a bloated property sector</p> <p>Xi Jinping’s to-do list has seen a lot of ticks in recent months: more flights into Taiwan’s defence zone; suppressing dissenting voices in Hong Kong; clipping the wings of tech barons; outlawing the out-of-school tutoring industry. The list goes on.</p> <p>However, one key initiative – introducing a local property tax – has attracted fewer headlines but is apparently so controversial within China’s ruling Communist party that even Xi is still only able to deal in trial schemes rather than wholesale change.</p> <p>The decision to pilot the tax on all types of property in selected regions for five years – most likely important cities such as Shenzhen and Hangzhou– was taken last month. It is seen as vital to reforming the country’s bloated property sector, a concrete-and-glass divide between China’s haves and have-nots which has been personified by the woes of the heavily indebted developer China Evergrande.</p>

The property tax is controversial because local governments rely on land sales for at least 40% of their revenues. This has encouraged an aggressive sales policy, aided and abetted by property developers happy to take on massive debts to buy the land and build ever more apartment blocks for buyers convinced the market is a one-way bet.

This decades-long party saw China's property developers build a debt mountain of around \$5tn, according to analysts at Nomura, before Beijing called time by restricting what they could borrow. When the music stopped, Evergrande was stranded on the dancefloor with \$300bn of debt, and it faces its latest [pay-up-or-default deadline](#) on 10 November.

Evergrande is just the tip of the iceberg though. Developers have to repay around \$92bn in the next year, and analysts at S&P have estimated that [more than a third](#) could experience difficulties meeting those obligations.

Kaisa Group, second only to [Evergrande](#) in terms of risky borrowing in US dollar bonds, became the latest focus for concern when its shares were suspended in Hong Kong on Friday morning because of cash flow problems.

Xi has clearly had enough of the sector's excesses. , But the question is whether the president's [property tax experiment](#) to bring the housing market under control is too little, too late.

Real estate investment accounted for 12-15% of GDP in [China](#) between 2011 and 2018, the Harvard economists Kenneth Rogoff and Yuanchen Yang estimate. This compares with a 7% share of GDP in the US at the peak of the housing boom in 2005. Once related property market activity is added to the Chinese numbers, the proportion of GDP is more like 30%.

Such a large property market does not necessarily create a problem. After all, China has a population of 1.4 billion and needed to build millions of new homes because hundreds of millions of people have moved to urban areas in the past 30 to 40 years.

Speculation nation

The notion that prices can only go up has made buying a house in China enormously expensive, with a house price-to-household income ratio of 19 in the biggest "tier-one" cities such as Beijing or Shanghai, 10 in tier-two and seven in tier-three cities, Canada-based [BCA Research says](#). The average ratio in the UK is about 10 and in the US it is four, although mortgage rates are much lower in those countries, making it easier for households to manage the debt.

However, the speculative nature of the market is what really makes China stand apart. Between 2008-10, the proportion of people buying homes in China who were first-time buyers was 70%, according to the Survey and Research Center for China Household Finance. By 2018, after the property and construction sectors were jet-propelled by the 4tn yuan of post-financial crisis stimulus, that figure had dropped to 11.5%.

The same survey shows that first-time buyers were being replaced at a rapid rate by investors. In 2018, 22.5% of homebuyers already owned two or more dwellings, while 66% owned one. No wonder that [Xi had said the year before](#) that houses should be for "living in, not for speculating".

Because these investors rarely rent out their properties, one-fifth of China's housing – or at least 65m homes – lie empty. Rental yields are typically about 2% in China, which is way below the typical mortgage rate of 5.4%. In other words, the buy-to-let strategy that has proved popular for wealthy people in western countries such as the UK doesn't make sense in China. Investors are instead buying the properties solely because they expect the value to keep going up.

"Clearly, housing in China has become an object of speculation which has made it unattainable for first-time homebuyers," analysts at BCA Research wrote recently.

“Property developers have been building the wrong type of housing at the wrong prices and for the wrong type of buyers,” they said. “They have been building high-end houses and selling them at very high prices to high-income households who have been buying multiple properties as investments.”

The massive speculative bubble – China’s household debt is about 100%, or about the same as that of the US – has been magnified by property developers doing the same on an even bigger scale. While the cost of borrowing remained lower than the rate of house price growth, developers simply took on more debt to build ever more properties selling at ever higher prices while pocketing ever higher profits.

The catch is that with demand falling thanks to a declining population, fewer people starting families, and [prices also tumbling](#), those profits have disappeared and may soon turn into massive losses.

‘The music has stopped’

It remains to be seen whether Beijing will allow Evergrande or any other large developer to fail. Most observers expect it to be a “controlled demolition” – in other words restructured in an orderly manner – and debts distributed via state-owned banks and institutions. Containing the impact of falling house prices in the wake of such restructuring and the introduction of a property tax could be more difficult.

Lower prices might be good for some people not yet on the property ladder, but with more than 90% of the urban population owning property and 40% of household wealth tied up in property, any disorderly collapse in values could trigger [social unrest such as that seen during past downturns](#).

This is what Anne Stevenson Yang, co-founder of Connecticut-based J Capital Research and a China specialist, fears. She says the Communist party supported free market activity as long as it unlocked value for the state. Now it wants to rein in the excess but the process of deflating the market is freighted with risk for Xi and his government.

“The buying of new apartments has got to be coming to an end,” she said. “The music has stopped and all these people can’t find a chair. Then what?”

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HEADLINE	11/05 UK: ventilate home to stop Covid spread
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/05/ventilate-home-stop-covid-spread-government-uk
GIST	<p>People are being urged to open their windows for 10 minutes every hour when they are socialising at home in an attempt to stop the spread of Covid-19 as winter approaches.</p> <p>Doctors and scientists are backing a government-funded campaign across all media platforms to encourage people to ventilate their home to help disperse virus particles.</p> <p>It will include a short film asking people to “stop Covid-19 hanging around” and showing how the coronavirus can build up in an enclosed space where an infected person is talking to someone else, linger in the air and then get passed on to someone else.</p> <p>Dr Thomas Waite, a deputy chief medical officer for England, said: “Small but important actions can help protect us against Covid-19. Getting vaccinations, wearing a face covering in enclosed spaces and taking regular Covid-19 tests all make an important difference but it is also crucial that we don’t overlook the value of ventilation.</p> <p>“With winter fast approaching and people spending more time indoors, it’s vital everyone understands the importance of using ventilation, such as regularly opening windows – even if just for a few minutes – to keep the air moving and prevent infections.”</p> <p>The Department of Health and Social Care is asking people to take ventilation more seriously after a representative survey of 3,000 people in England found that 64% do not know that opening windows helps limit Covid’s spread and only 29% do so when visitors come to their home.</p>

It said: “With fewer restrictions in place this winter, following the success of the vaccination programme, the act of refreshing air in the home when people have visitors is even more important for everyone to keep infections down.”

Dr Chaand Nagpaul, the leader of the British Medical Association, welcomed the campaign and belated communication with the public about the benefits of ventilation.

But he added: “We believe action should go further than a campaign, by setting explicit standards for ventilation in public spaces, including the appropriate use of CO2 monitors to assess adequate levels of ventilation.

“There should also be resources and guidance to businesses so they can implement changes.”

Experts involved in the push on ventilation hope to prompt a much greater use of open windows, especially with much greater social mixing indoors set to occur before and during the festive period.

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HEADLINE	11/04 Govt. cuts ties w/troubled vaccine maker
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/04/us/emergent-biosolutions-covid-vaccine.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — The federal government has canceled its contract with a troubled Covid-19 vaccine manufacturer that ruined millions of doses and had to halt production for months after regulators raised serious quality concerns.</p> <p>The decision marks a stark reversal of fortune for the politically connected contractor, Maryland-based Emergent BioSolutions, and an abandonment by the government of a deal that was supposed to be a centerpiece of Operation Warp Speed.</p> <p>Early in the pandemic, the government decided to bank on the company to be the sole domestic manufacturer of the Johnson & Johnson and AstraZeneca vaccines. But this March, testing found that a batch of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine had been contaminated, and Emergent agreed to pause manufacturing after an inspection uncovered a host of problems at its facility in Baltimore’s Bayview area.</p> <p>The termination of the contract, disclosed on Thursday by Emergent executives during a call with investors, was the result of negotiations that began after the government earlier this year stopped making payments under the deal, which was awarded in May 2020 and was worth more than \$600 million. Emergent will now forgo roughly \$180 million of that amount, according to company disclosures.</p> <p>The company said it would continue working with Johnson & Johnson to produce its vaccine in Baltimore because the arrangement with that company, while endorsed by the government, was not financed under the \$600 million deal. While the site has not yet won regulators’ approval, it has resumed operations, and the Food and Drug Administration has allowed roughly 100 million doses to be released for potential use.</p> <p>The contract cancellation also brings an abrupt end to a nearly decade-old effort by the government that was intended to better prepare for a pandemic. In 2012, the Department of Health and Human Services gave Emergent a \$163 million contract to expand the Baltimore site and ready it to rapidly produce vaccines in response to a novel virus.</p> <p>The decision disclosed on Thursday put a stop to that deal years before it was set to expire, leaving the facility without the stamp of approval that it had long touted in presentations to investors and potential clients.</p> <p>The Emergent chief executive, Robert Kramer, acknowledged during the investor call that the initiative, “as it was contemplated back in 2012, was a good idea at the time, but unfortunately it didn’t work out as it was anticipated.” Mr. Kramer also sought to put a positive spin on the breakup, writing in a guest essay</p>

in [The Baltimore Sun](#) that the health department had agreed to Emergent's "request to end our 9-year pandemic manufacturing partnership."

Mr. Kramer laid blame on the government, even as he conceded that "not everything went perfectly" during the pandemic. "But if you want companies to engage," he wrote, "you need to be willing to stand by them through both challenge and achievement."

But a senior Biden administration official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, disputed Mr. Kramer's account. The official said that the health department had ended the contract, and that the termination was structured in such a way that the company would not fight it and the government would avoid a costly legal challenge. The company had been asking for payment since spring, the official added, but the government had not paid since the contamination was disclosed.

When the pandemic arrived last year, the Baltimore site still had not won regulatory approval to mass-produce any approved product, and [a government assessment warned](#) that relying on the largely untested facility was risky.

Mr. Kramer on Thursday said a lack of experience at the factory was attributable in large part to a lack of consistent government funding over the years. "The necessary operational investments by all administrations fell short of what was needed to maintain capability in case of an emergency," he said.

Since May, Emergent has said it expected federal regulators to soon certify vaccine production at the Baltimore plant. But regulators have yet to issue that certification, although they have certified Johnson & Johnson's manufacturing operation in the Netherlands as well as plants that produce vaccines for Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines.

Instead of giving the Bayview plant a green light, the F.D.A. [cleared multiple batches](#) of AstraZeneca's and Johnson & Johnson's vaccines — and then only after special scrutiny, because of the plant's problems. A batch can include as many as 15 million doses.

The cancellation appears to have no impact on the availability of coronavirus vaccines in the United States. The contract only involved production of AstraZeneca's vaccine, which is not authorized for distribution in the United States.

Although Johnson & Johnson, one of only three federally authorized vaccines here, produced tens of millions of doses at the Baltimore plant, it did so under a separate contract with Emergent as its subcontractor.

In a statement on Thursday, a spokesman for Johnson & Johnson said that "today's announcement by Emergent BioSolutions will not impact our collaboration to produce our Covid-19 vaccine." The company said it would continue to work with authorities to obtain certification of the Bayview site for production of its vaccine.

Johnson & Johnson has played a comparatively minor role in the nation's vaccination campaign. Slightly more than 15 million people have received one dose of the Johnson & Johnson shot, compared with nearly 71 million who have received two doses of the Moderna vaccine and 107 million who have received two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. In a series of regulatory decisions since mid-September, at least some recipients of all three vaccines became eligible for booster shots.

The manufacturing problems at the Bayview site have affected immunization efforts outside the United States, [delaying the distribution](#) of vaccines in Canada, the European Union and South Africa.

Executives emphasized during Thursday's call that the cancellation would not affect the other government contracts that remain the core of Emergent's business. In fact, the company noted, health officials this year committed to purchasing another \$637 million worth of Emergent's anthrax and smallpox products in coming months.

	<p>The company also disclosed that Mary Oates, a former Pfizer executive who joined Emergent in November 2020 as a senior vice president overseeing manufacturing quality, was leaving “to pursue a new career opportunity.”</p> <p>In September, Emergent announced that it had reached a five-year agreement with Providence Therapeutics, a Canadian biotechnology company that specializes in mRNA vaccine therapies, to support that company’s Covid-19 mRNA vaccine development.</p> <p>“Emergent’s commitment to fight the Covid-19 pandemic is anchored in our partnerships with innovators who share the same mission to address public health threats around the world,” Adam R. Havey, the company’s executive vice president and chief operating officer, said in a statement at the time.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 WHO: Europe center of pandemic again
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/04/world/covid-delta-variant-vaccine?type=stylIn-live-updates&label=coronavirus%20updates&index=0#covid-surge-europe-who
GIST	<p>Europe is again experiencing near-record levels of coronavirus cases, and could experience half a million Covid-related deaths in the next three months, the World Health Organization said on Thursday.</p> <p>Europe accounted for 59 percent of the world’s newly reported coronavirus cases last week, and for nearly half the world’s Covid-related deaths, Hans Kluge, the W.H.O.’s director for the 53 countries in its European region, told reporters.</p> <p>Dr. Kluge said that there were 1.8 million new cases and about 24,000 deaths in the European region in the past week.</p> <p>“We are at another critical point of pandemic resurgence,” Dr. Kluge said. “Europe is back at the epicenter of the pandemic — where we were one year ago.”</p> <p>The region is reporting an average of more than 30 new cases a day for every 100,000 people, a rate that has almost doubled since mid-September. Eighteen of the 20 countries around the world that are reporting the most new cases per day, relative to their populations, are in Europe or the part of Central Asia that the W.H.O. includes in its European region.</p> <p>New reported cases reached a record high in Germany on Wednesday, when the nation recorded 33,949 new infections in a 24-hour period. Only 67 percent of the country is fully vaccinated.</p> <p>Covid-related deaths in Europe are also increasing.</p> <p>“If we stay on this trajectory, we could see another half a million Covid-19 deaths in Europe and Central Asia by the first of February next year,” Dr. Kluge said.</p> <p>The surge in infections, driven by the Delta variant, is affecting all age groups, Dr. Kluge said, but it has been deadliest among older people. Three-quarters of those who died last week were over 65, and most were not fully vaccinated, he said.</p> <p>Hospitals are being flooded with Covid patients across the region; in 43 of the 53 countries, hospitals are likely to face high to extreme stress in the next three months, the W.H.O. projected.</p> <p>Dr. Kluge said the virus was surging because precautions like mask-wearing were relaxed and because too few people have been vaccinated.</p>

Return to Top	<p>Eight countries in the region have vaccinated more than 70 percent of their populations, but two have managed to immunize less than 10 percent, he said. Hospital admission rates were high, he said, in the countries where vaccination rates were low.</p> <p>Outbreaks have also appeared in unvaccinated populations in countries with relatively high rates of vaccination. In Italy, which has fully vaccinated 72 percent of its population and recently imposed stringent national rules to encourage workers to get vaccinated, the city of Trieste became a hotbed of infections two weeks after thousands of vaccine skeptics gathered to protest the new rules.</p> <p>Dr. Kluge also emphasized the continued need for basic precautions like mask-wearing, social distance and good indoor ventilation, and he took note of projections that 188,000 lives could be saved in Europe in the next three months if 95 percent of the population wore masks.</p> <p>“We must change our tactics, from reacting to surges of Covid-19 to preventing them from happening in the first place,” Dr. Kluge said.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 Agreement on mandates: NYC, 9 unions
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/04/world/covid-delta-variant-vaccine?type=stylIn-live-updates&label=coronavirus%20updates&index=0#nyc-vaccine-mandate-union
GIST	<p>Mayor Bill de Blasio has reached a deal with nine labor unions regarding how the city will handle unvaccinated employees under its tough new vaccination mandate. In exchange, the unions have agreed to drop their legal efforts to overturn the new policy, the city announced Thursday.</p> <p>The nine unions collectively represent about 88,000 of the 160,000 employees covered by the latest mandate, which requires all city employees to get vaccinated for the coronavirus with no option to take a weekly test. The unions include District Council 37, Teamsters Local 237, the Uniformed Sanitationmen’s Association Local 831, and SEIU Local 300.</p> <p>“We have reached an agreement that gives our members options,” said Henry Garrido, the executive director of District Council 37, the largest public employees union.</p> <p>“Thank you to these unions for working with us to keep New Yorkers safe,” Mr. de Blasio said.</p> <p>Since going into effect on Nov. 1, the city’s mandate has driven the vaccination rate among the city’s 370,000 workers up to 92 percent. About 9,000 employees have been placed on unpaid leave for refusing vaccination. An additional 12,000 unvaccinated employees are being permitted to work with weekly testing while they await a decision on a religious or medical exemption.</p> <p>The city has been trying to reach agreements with 42 unions, but most of them have not hammered out a deal with City Hall. Those include the police and fire unions, which have pushed back the hardest against the mandate.</p> <p>Under the agreements announced Thursday, union members have agreed to follow many of the same rules set up by an arbitrator to govern how the vaccine mandate is affecting the city’s teachers. The city’s vaccine mandate went into effect for about 150,000 education employees in early October.</p> <p>Among the terms are strict rules that will limit religious exemptions to vaccination for city workers. Requests will only be considered for employees who are members of organized and recognized religions, accompanied by a letter from clergy.</p> <p>At the city schools, that policy in practice has meant that only members of religions with known opposition to vaccination, such as Christian Science, have qualified for religious exemptions. Only 150 adults who work in the city’s schools received such exemptions, the Department of Education said Monday.</p>

	<p>But the nine unions who reached an agreement on Thursday also won concessions, including an extension of the time employees can apply for religious exemptions until Friday, and the right to work with pay while their cases are being decided. Previously, the deadline had been Oct. 27.</p> <p>Unvaccinated union members also won the right to keep their health benefits while on unpaid leave until the end of June 2022. After that, they will be terminated. This is a slightly shorter timeline than teachers received.</p> <p>Pregnant women in their third trimester can also take compensatory time or sick leave rather than have to go completely unpaid. And all unvaccinated workers can come back to work at any time before July 1, 2022, if they decide to get a Covid shot.</p> <p>The other five unions involved in the deal are: the Organization of Staff Analysts, Sanitation Officers Local 444, CWA Local 1180 and the Civil Service Bar Association of the Teamsters.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 NRF group: vaccine mandate 'burdensome'
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/04/world/covid-delta-variant-vaccine?type=stylIn-live-updates&label=coronavirus%20updates&index=0#a-retail-trade-group-calls-the-biden-vaccine-mandate-burdensome
GIST	<p>The National Retail Federation, an industry trade group that represents American retailers including major chains, said on Thursday that a vaccine mandate from the Biden administration for large private employers would “impose burdensome new requirements on retailers during the crucial holiday shopping season.”</p> <p>The new guidance from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration will cover 84 million workers, who will be required by Jan. 4 to be fully vaccinated or undergo weekly testing. OSHA does not require employers to pay for or provide tests, which was a concern of the National Retail Federation.</p> <p>The N.R.F. expressed concern in October that the emergency order tied to the vaccinations avoided the “normal review and comment process of rulemaking.”</p> <p>“Retailers have consistently requested that the administration take public comment on this new vaccine mandate,” David French, the group’s senior vice president for government relations, said in a statement on Thursday. “It is critical that the rule not cause unnecessary disruption to the economy, exacerbate the pre-existing work force shortage or saddle retailers, who are already taking considerable steps to keep their employees and customers safe, with needless additional requirements and regulatory burdens.”</p> <p>Retail is the second-biggest private employment sector in the United States, after health care, and the industry is concerned about a tight labor market, particularly as it heads into a holiday season that is expected to be much busier than it was in 2020. The group wrote a letter to Martin J. Walsh, the labor secretary, last month, saying that any emergency order around vaccines “could significantly diminish the labor pool, particularly in some geographic areas and amongst some demographics in which vaccine hesitancy is widespread.”</p> <p>Several large employers — including Walmart, the nation’s largest private employer; Amazon, the second-largest; and Target — declined to comment. Gap, the owner of Banana Republic and Old Navy, said that it had nothing new to share and pointed to a September statement about incentives it was offering to encourage vaccinations among staff, including weekly drawings to win \$1,000.</p> <p>A representative for Macy’s said on Thursday that its staff was strongly encouraged to get vaccinated and that it was “studying the most recent government mandate and will implement it as required.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 OSHA new rules for corporate America
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/04/world/covid-delta-variant-vaccine?type=stylIn-live-updates&label=coronavirus%20updates&index=0#heres-what-the-vaccine-or-testing-requirement-for-us-employers-with-100-or-more-workers-could-mean-for-you
GIST	<p>Corporate America has entered the next phase of its effort to counter the spread of the coronavirus. Companies of 100 or more employees have until Jan. 4 to ensure all their workers are either fully vaccinated or submit to weekly testing and mandatory masking.</p> <p>The measure was announced by President Biden in September, and details were released on Thursday by the Labor Department's Occupational Safety and Health Administration.</p> <p>Here are answers to some of the most commonly asked questions about what OSHA's rule means for American workers and their employers.</p> <p>What is OSHA's new rule? Private companies of 100 or more employees must require their workers to be fully vaccinated by Jan. 4 or submit to weekly coronavirus testing and mask-wearing while in the workplace. The deadline for employers to enforce the mask mandate is Dec. 5, after which they could face stiff fines for not imposing the rule.</p> <p>Which employers are covered by OSHA's rule? Any employer with 100 or more workers, including part-time employees but not independent contractors, will be required to adhere to the rule.</p> <p>OSHA is currently considering whether to extend the rule to employers with fewer than 100 workers.</p> <p>Who can claim an exemption? Who will determine those exceptions? Employers are required to give two kinds of exemptions to the vaccine mandates: medical and religious. Exemptions for people with certain medical conditions are protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Many employers require people to present a doctor's note to qualify for this exemption. Exemptions for people with sincerely held religious beliefs are protected under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. So far, no major religion has banned its members from taking the coronavirus vaccine.</p> <p>Can employers fire workers who don't comply? The religious and medical exemptions will come into play here — but when it comes to people who do not have exemptions, employers are generally free to discipline people who don't follow their rules. They may face pushback, though, under collective bargaining agreements.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 Italy Covid flourishes for anti-vax protests
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/04/world/covid-delta-variant-vaccine?type=stylIn-live-updates&label=coronavirus%20updates&index=0#covid-flourishes-in-a-port-where-italys-vaccine-resisters-took-to-the-streets
GIST	<p>The northeastern Italian port city of Trieste, once a cosmopolitan maritime hub of the Austro-Hungarian empire, became an epicenter of protest last month as thousands of vaccine skeptics marched alongside dock workers to protest the government's tough new plan to control the coronavirus.</p> <p>Two weeks later, Trieste has emerged as a center of something else: a Covid outbreak linked directly to those protests that threatens to burden intensive care units, usher in new social-distancing restrictions and mar the reputation of a city best known as a linguistic and cultural borderland with vast ambitions for its revitalized port.</p>

	<p>“The situation in Trieste is particularly worrisome,” said Dr. Fabio Barbone, the epidemiologist leading the effort against the spread of Covid in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region, where Trieste is the capital. The region’s president, Massimiliano Fedriga, was more blunt, saying, “It is the moment to say with clarity: Enough idiocy.”</p> <p>The nationwide plan Italy adopted threatens workers with unpaid leave and fines if they fail to obtain a health certificate, known as a Green Pass. Italians are required to provide proof of vaccination, a negative rapid swab test or proof of a recent recovery from Covid-19 to go to the workplace.</p> <p>Under the leadership of Prime Minister Mario Draghi, Italy has mostly succeeded in containing Covid cases after having been devastated early in the pandemic, a fact that drew praise at the Group of 20 summit in Rome at the weekend.</p> <p>But the Trieste outbreak shows how an unvaccinated minority — whether motivated by concerns about freedom, the right to work or unfounded conspiracy theories — can still threaten the greater public health and how difficult it can be to bring vaccine resisters into the fold.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 Newly vaccinated protected for holidays?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/04/world/covid-delta-variant-vaccine?type=stylIn-live-updates&label=coronavirus%20updates&index=0#covid-vaccine-children-holidays
GIST	<p>With coronavirus vaccinations of children aged 5 to 11 beginning in the United States this week, parents may be wondering whether their families will now be able to gather safely for the holidays.</p> <p>The dosing schedule for Pfizer-BioNTech’s vaccine — the one that federal regulators endorsed on Tuesday for use in those younger children — requires two shots three weeks apart. Individuals are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after the second shot, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.</p> <p>That means that even children who get the Pfizer-BioNTech shots right away will not be considered fully immunized until the first week in December — too late for Thanksgiving on Nov. 25, or the start of Hanukkah on Nov. 28.</p> <p>Still, the first shot provides some protection even before the second shot is due, and there remains plenty of time for the 29 million children in that age group to get fully immunized before Christmas, Kwanzaa and New Year’s Day.</p> <p>The doses that children ages 5 to 11 are eligible for are one-third the size of the doses available for adults and children over 12. The needles used are smaller, and the vaccine is packaged in smaller vials, in the hope of avoiding a mix-up with adult doses.</p> <p>While several million pediatric doses should be available in the next few days, the vaccination program for children 5 to 11 will not be “running at full strength” until next week, Jeffrey D. Zients, the Biden administration’s pandemic response coordinator, said on Monday.</p> <p>About 68 percent of U.S. residents 12 and older have been fully vaccinated so far, and 78 percent have received at least one dose, according to federal data.</p> <p>Employment-related vaccination deadlines — get a shot or lose your job — have prompted many adults to get inoculated in recent weeks. Those last-minute recipients, though, face the same tight calendar before the holidays that the children do, since the C.D.C. says they are not considered fully vaccinated until two weeks after receiving either a second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines or a single dose of Johnson & Johnson’s vaccine.</p>

	<p>For those choosing to be fully protected in time for Christmas Day, Dec. 25, here are the last dates to start being vaccinated in the United States:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine (available for adults and children 5 and older): Nov. 20. • For the Moderna vaccine (available for adults): Nov. 13. • For the Johnson & Johnson single-dose vaccine (available for adults): Dec. 11. <p>Members of some Orthodox Christian churches have a little more time, because they celebrate Christmas in early January.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 Crackdown sweeps Ethiopia's capital
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/04/world/africa/ethiopia-tigray-crackdown.html
GIST	<p>NAIROBI, Kenya — House-to-house searches. Arbitrary arrests. Families cowering in their homes, dreading a knock on the door.</p> <p>A wave of fear spread across the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, on Thursday as the authorities accelerated their campaign against members of a once-powerful ethnic group accused of sympathizing with rebels now pressing toward the city.</p> <p>The sweeping measures targeting Tigrayans, from the same ethnic group as fighters who have been locked in civil war with Ethiopian government forces for the past year, raised concerns that the stage has been set for bursts of ethnically motivated violence.</p> <p>“The situation is very intense and really frightening,” Hailu, an ethnic Tigrayan detained earlier this year, during a previous wave of arrests, said by phone. He did not give his full name to avoid being targeted.</p> <p>The United States envoy to the Horn of Africa, Jeffrey Feltman, flew into Addis Ababa as the leader of an international scramble to try to stop the violence and bring Ethiopia's warring parties to the table. There were few signs it might succeed.</p> <p>Ethiopia's embattled prime minister, Abiy Ahmed, announced a state of emergency on Wednesday that granted him draconian powers. And he spoke in such inflammatory language that Facebook deleted one of his posts on Thursday. Hours later, the Ethiopian government issued a new post with similarly stark references, also on Facebook.</p> <p>“A rat that strays far from its hole is nearer to its death,” said the statement, referring to Tigrayan leaders and their supporters.</p> <p>Mr. Abiy, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019, was once seen as a bright and promising young leader. Now he finds his very future in doubt.</p> <p>The American envoy, Mr. Feltman, was backed by regional African leaders who, although previously reluctant to get involved in the Ethiopian conflict, are now openly alarmed at the prospect of an all-out collapse in Africa's second-most-populous nation.</p> <p>“The fighting must stop!” President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya said in a statement, reflecting fears in his country that a widening conflict in Ethiopia could mean a flood of refugees streaming across its borders.</p> <p>Instead, the fighting was spreading. A leader with the Tigray People's Liberation Front said its fighters had reached a town about 120 miles northeast of Addis Ababa, where they were locked in battle with Ethiopian forces.</p> <p>The Tigrayan official, who was not authorized to speak publicly, said the group hoped to sign an agreement with eight other opposition groups on Friday to ensure a “safe transition” in the country if Mr. Abiy was ousted.</p>

For the moment, it has been security officials leading the moves against Tigrayans. Witnesses said security officers had ramped up activities in several Tigrayan-majority neighborhoods in Addis Ababa like Lebu, Semmit and Bole Bulbula.

Tigrayans said they were being targeted on the basis of their identity cards or their language, both of which could identify their ethnic background.

At around 8 a.m. in Shira Meda, a neighborhood in the north of the capital, two police officers stood guard outside a house while other officers searched inside. After an hour, a reporter for The New York Times saw the police emerge with two teenage boys, followed by their visibly distraught mother.

“It’s a Tigrayan house,” said a woman standing in a crowd of onlookers gathered across the street. Other residents confirmed that the family were ethnic Tigrayans and said they had no known ties to Tigrayan politics.

Hours later, in the same neighborhood, women gathered at the gate of a local youth center, bringing food and water to male relatives who had been detained in recent days and were being held inside.

One woman said her husband, a trader who sells traditional cloth, had been arrested at his store two days earlier. The authorities seemed to be pursuing “every Tigrayan, especially the men,” she said, declining to give her name to avoid being arrested herself.

Security was tight outside the city’s Bole International Airport, where police officers and soldiers closely inspected vehicles and travelers entering and leaving the airport, which is the headquarters of Ethiopian Airlines and one of Africa’s busiest aviation hubs.

It is not just Tigrayans who are being targeted. The Tigrayan fighters have linked up in recent days with the Oromo Liberation Army, a group fighting for greater rights for the ethnic Oromos who make up about 35 percent of Ethiopia’s 110 million people. Tigrayans make up about 6 percent.

The O.L.A. has seized control of several towns on a major highway leading to the capital, and holds patches of the surrounding countryside, Western officials said. The government has declared the group a terrorist entity and jailed many suspected supporters. The O.L.A. claimed that 400 Ethiopian soldiers in the city had defected to their side. The claim could not be independently verified.

For everyone else, life in Addis Ababa has a sense of attenuated normality.

In Lege Tafo, on the northern edge of the capital, soldiers manned newly erected checkpoints and searched even ambulances.

At a ceremony in another part of the city, over 350 government officials — men and women, some middle-aged, and many in suit and tie — attended a ceremony where they volunteered to join the fight against the approaching Tigrayans.

Some residents stocked up on food in supermarkets, saying they no longer believed the upbeat accounts of the fighting propagated by pro-government media outlets. Relatives in towns recently captured by the Tigrayans painted a much grimmer picture, they said.

“They assured us that everything was under control, and we believed them,” said a man in his 70s, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

The man said that he had survived Ethiopia’s last major internal conflict, in 1991, when Tigrayan rebels stormed Addis Ababa after ousting a brutal Marxist regime.

“We thought this time would be different,” he said. “I can’t believe I’m living through it again.”

	<p>Tigrayans have been suffering discrimination since the war started a year ago, with many disappearing into detention, dismissed from their jobs or forced into exile.</p> <p>Mr. Abiy's government insisted it was only acting against supporters of the Tigray People's Liberation Front, a party that ruled Ethiopia with an iron fist for nearly three decades until Mr. Abiy came to power in 2018.</p> <p>But the political quickly became personal as Mr. Abiy resorted to increasingly harsh language against Tigrayan leaders, calling them "cancer" and "weeds," stoking wide fears that he was setting the stage for ethnically motivated violence against all Tigrayans.</p> <p>Such fears prompted Facebook to move against Mr. Abiy on Thursday, over a post that urged Ethiopians to take up arms and "bury" the approaching rebel forces. Facebook's parent company, Meta, said in statement it had removed the post for "violating our policies against inciting and supporting violence."</p> <p>Critics say Facebook is acting too late. Last month a Facebook whistle-blower, Frances Haugen, told Congress she came forward in part to shine light on "how badly Facebook is handling places like Ethiopia."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 Pact fuels speculation: drones Tigray war
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/04/ethiopia-turkey-pact-fuels-speculation-about-drone-use-in-tigray-war
GIST	<p>Ethiopia's government has forged an alliance with Turkey, amid reports that it wants to deploy armed Turkish drones in its bitter war against forces from the region of Tigray.</p> <p>Abiy Ahmed, Ethiopia's prime minister, signed a military cooperation agreement on a visit Ankara in August with Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.</p> <p>The details of the agreement have not been published, but officials told Reuters in October that Ethiopia had requested Turkey's Bayraktar TB2 drones, considered to be the most effective munitions of their type in the world.</p> <p>Abiy's trip came two months after Ethiopian forces had been expelled from Tigray's capital, Mekelle, and ahead of an October air and ground counter offensive, which appears to have been rapidly pushed back.</p> <p>Alex de Waal, director of the World Peace Foundation at Tufts University, said: "The fighting is already at an intense scale and ferocity, with perhaps 100,000 soldiers already dead on the Ethiopian side. Five million civilians are in need of food aid as a result of the conflict, and yet Addis is still shopping for drones and other arms."</p> <p>TB2 drones have become sought after across Africa, Asia and parts of Europe after the remotely-piloted craft were deemed to have tipped the balance in favour of Azerbaijan in its war with Armenia last autumn over the disputed enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh.</p> <p>Ethiopia's government is already believed to have deployed drones made in Iran and China. But neither are, in military terms, considered as effective as Turkey's TB2s, made by Baykar Makina, a company whose chief technology officer, Selçuk Bayraktar is married to Erdoğan's younger daughter.</p> <p>Neither government has publicly commented on the sale of drones, but there is already evidence to suggest that Turkish munitions are in use: a fragment of a Turkish-made laser-guided bomb found by Tigrayan forces that was passed to journalist and analyst Martin Plaut early last month.</p>

It cannot be conclusively determined from where it was fired, but western experts say the missile from which the fragment came can be used by TB2 drones.

TB2 drones were initially used by Ankara against Kurdish separatists inside its own country and neighbouring Syria and Iraq. Since then they have also been deployed on behalf of the internationally-recognised Libyan government in Tripoli to stave off an offensive by the eastern-based commander Khalifa Haftar.

They cost around \$1m to \$2m a time – a tenth or less than the higher specification US Protector drone – which Washington has only been willing to sell to a handful of countries. An increasingly assertive Ankara has rapidly stepped up exports, and last week Kyrgyzstan [became the latest country to put in an order](#).

The rapid spread of Turkey's drone technology, and the authoritarian nature of some of the buyers, alarms some commentators. "What we are seeing is the consequences of the international community not wanting to deal with drone proliferation," said Chris Coles, from Drone Wars, a UK based NGO.

"Drones are heating up conflicts in the region because pilotless munitions lower the threshold for war. A country might be condemned for supplying boots on the ground to intervene in a conflict, but there is far less complaint if instead they are supplying drones."

Thousands – possibly as many as 30,000, according to De Waal – young, poorly trained, poorly armed Ethiopian soldiers are believed to have been killed following the start of the government's October offensive in intense fighting.

Mekelle has been targeted with a series of government airstrikes in recent days, with civilians often the victims. Six people – including three children – were killed in a strike last week, [according to reports](#) from the ground, in which at least 27 others were wounded.

Accurate information about the conflict and its impact is hard to obtain, partly because very few journalists and humanitarian agencies are operating on the ground. Tigray remains subject to a blockade, with the UN complaining in August that only 10% of aid supplies were able to get through.

On Wednesday, the most comprehensive report yet into the conflict, a joint investigation by the UN and the country's human rights commission, concluded that all sides in the conflict may have committed war crimes and other crimes against humanity.

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HEADLINE	11/04 World's most blatant Covid-19 cover up
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-coronavirus-coverup-tanzania-11636042309?mod=hp_lead_pos5
GIST	<p>DAR ES SALAAM, Tanzania—Tucked away in a northern suburb of this sprawling East African city is a burial site that is evidence of one of the world's great coronavirus coverups.</p> <p>At the Kondo graveyard in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, unmasked volunteers have been digging holes and felling trees to expand a compound that has tripled in size since last year. During the pandemic's first wave, hazmat-suited government officials came at night to secretly bury the dead, graveyard workers and bereaved families said. Now, small groups of mourners gather for hasty ceremonies next to floral tributes.</p> <p>Kondo's gravediggers said those buried there since last year have one thing in common: All died as a result of the coronavirus, yet none were recorded as suffering from Covid-19. They said they know by speaking to the families and officials from the municipality.</p> <p>"This is one of the government's coronavirus cemeteries, but we're not allowed to call it that," said Said Ali Salum, a caretaker who has worked there so long that locals call him or "Mzee Wa-Makaburi," or Mr. Graveyard. "We used to bury one a week [before the pandemic], but over the past year we have reached 17 a day."</p>

Tanzania, a country famous for Serengeti safaris and a turquoise coastline, has engaged in a grim experiment with implications beyond its borders: denying the existence of Covid-19. How that is playing out offers clues on the hidden toll of the pandemic across the developing world.

[Last year, President John Magufuli declared the virus a “satanic myth”](#) propagated by imperialist powers. While his neighbors sealed borders and locked down, his country of 58 million stayed open. His government barred doctors from registering coronavirus as the cause of death and labeled those who wore masks unpatriotic.

Seeking to keep the economy open and rally nationalist sentiment ahead of elections, he blocked foreign journalists from entering the country, rejected vaccines and refused to provide data to the World Health Organization. News organizations reporting on Covid-19 were shut down for “scaremongering,” and reporters threatened with jail.

By this spring, the president was dead, along with six other senior politicians and several of the country’s generals. The official cause of Mr. Magufuli’s death was heart failure. The details remain secret. Diplomats, analysts and opposition leaders say he had Covid-19.

Tanzania’s refusal to collect virus data is the most extreme example of the hidden toll of the pandemic in Africa, where few countries offer accurate counts of the sick and dead. Official figures show only 220,000 people have died on the continent, which has a total population of 1.3 billion, as a result of Covid-19. The U.S., population 330 million, has registered more than 750,000 Covid-19 deaths.

Scientists have partly attributed that lower count to criteria including [youthful populations and better ventilated housing](#).

Even if Africa has fared better than hard-hit nations in the West, graveyards and mortuaries tell of a mortality rate far higher than the official numbers. In Uganda’s capital, Kampala, workers at the main Bukasa cemetery said the average number of daily burials has jumped from six to 30 since last year. Workers said relatives told them the extra deaths are from Covid-19. In the central morgue of Zambia’s capital, Lusaka, Covid-19 was present in 87% of all bodies in June, Boston University scientists found in a recent study.

The official death numbers are “epidemiologically impossible. The only sense that it makes is that we are not counting,” said Ayoade Alakija, co-chair of the African Union’s African Vaccine Delivery Alliance. “And of course we’re not counting—it’s glaring.”

Data gap

To bridge the data gaps, [some scientists are looking to “excess mortality” figures](#)—the number of deaths from any cause in a given period over a historical baseline from recent years—to build new estimates. One recent study by The Economist using machine learning estimated as many as 17 million people world-wide, more than three times the official number, had died of Covid-19. The [official global death toll recently surpassed five million](#).

The study didn’t put a figure on excess mortality in Africa, where data on mortality from all causes is limited. The United Nations says over half the countries there keep only handwritten death records, and 14 of those countries record at most only 10% of all deaths. Data scientists said the gap in Africa between recorded Covid-19 deaths and excess deaths is likely among the world’s most severe.

The Africa director at WHO, Matshidiso Moeti, said in October the organization estimated that about 59 million people in Africa had been infected with Covid-19 during the pandemic, even though only around 8.5 million cases have been officially recorded.

Underlining the problem is a lack of testing: African nations have tested just 70 million people for Covid-19, or less than 5% of the population, according to WHO. In the U.S., for comparison, total tests number about 618 million, close to twice the population, according to the CDC.

Vaccines are also scarce across the continent. As the U.S. and Europe roll out booster shots, just 6% of sub-Saharan Africa's 1.1 billion population have been fully vaccinated. Scientists said that creates a risk the continent could foster new and potentially more deadly variants.

In Tanzania, where the official Covid-19 death toll is 724, the Economist study estimated an excess mortality of up to 69,000 since the pandemic began.

Tanzania's government said it stands by the figures issued by the national statistics agency, which registered zero new cases or deaths from May 2020 until June 2021. The Tanzanian president's office referred questions to the health ministry, which didn't respond to multiple requests for comment.

According to interviews with senior officials, doctors, mortuary workers and bereaved families, and an audit of graveyards, Covid-19 has likely killed thousands.

Around the start of this year, six senior politicians, including members of Mr. Magufuli's cabinet, and several of his top generals died in quick succession from what the government labeled respiratory illnesses.

On March 17, the president, a dynamic 61-year-old known as "the Bulldozer" for his pugilistic approach to politics, was declared dead from what the government classified as heart complications. The government has declined to release details of his death, which took place in a heavily guarded hospital inside the National Intelligence Service compound.

Senior government officials, Western diplomats and Tanzanian opposition leaders say Mr. Magufuli contracted Covid-19 and was unconscious on a ventilator for a week before his breathing support was switched off.

With the former president's allies still running the intelligence and security services, doctors and officials who administered Mr. Magufuli's policy said they are too afraid to speak out.

Mr. Magufuli's successor, [Samia Suluhu Hassan, has slowly begun to re-engage with international agencies](#) and has [launched a tentative vaccine rollout](#). But with vaccine skepticism widespread after a year of official Covid denial, the shots have so far reached just 1.6% of the population, one of the lowest rates in the world.

At a vaccination hub in Dar es Salaam's Tandale hospital on a recent day, nurse Davineth Lameck gestured to the empty waiting room. "We have administered seven shots today, and that was busy," she said.

Ms. Hassan, the president, has tried to shift attitudes. She was vaccinated live on state television and announced the government would allocate \$2.2 million for pandemic research. She used her first address to the U.N. General Assembly in September to call for vaccine equity and the waiving of patent rights so developing countries could produce their own shots.

"It is indispensable that countries with surplus Covid-19 vaccine doses share them with other countries," she said. "We tend to forget that no one is safe until everyone is safe."

Tanzania in July received its first one million vaccine doses from the U.S. via Covax, a coalition of global organizations including WHO that are working to distribute vaccines, and one million doses of China's Sinopharm vaccine arrived last month.

Opposition groups say there are signs Ms. Hassan is continuing with Mr. Magufuli's authoritarian approach. Freeman Mbowe, leader of the main opposition Chadema party, has been held on terror charges since July, when he was arrested with several other party officials hours before a planned address on proposed constitutional reforms.

'Covid free'

Back in April 2020, Mr. Magufuli stood in front of hundreds of unmasked worshipers in the Dodoma Cathedral to make a declaration televised live to the nation. "The corona disease has been eliminated thanks to God," he said, raising an index finger. "Tanzania is now Covid free."

In the weeks prior, Mr. Magufuli, who frequently cited his doctorate in chemistry, had abandoned his government's policy of coronavirus prevention and dissolved the health ministry's Covid-19 response team that was established in consultation with WHO.

The church speech was the climax of three days of nationwide prayer he said had delivered the virus a mortal blow. The few Covid-19 restrictions still in place would be lifted, he added.

In May, a disturbing split-screen began to emerge. Government loyalists organized a "corona festival" in Dar es Salaam. Thousands poured into a city sports ground after fliers posted around the city promised dancing and cocktails.

A few kilometers away, in the sprawling suburb of Tabata, the virus was raging. In the space of three weeks, Richard Manongo, a 36-year-old chef, lost four members of his family and almost died himself.

"We were all living in the same house. All of sudden my uncle, aunt and two of my cousins aged 32 and 29 were gone," Mr. Manongo said, recalling the chorus of wheezing through the night. When he tried to take his ailing relatives to the central Mikocheni hospital, he was told there was no oxygen supply. Patients with Covid-19-like symptoms were being kept in isolation, the doctors told him, because staff were too afraid to treat them.

"When they passed, the government came at night and took the bodies away," he said. "On the death certificate they wrote 'acute pneumonia.' "

In the days after Mr. Magufuli declared the virus over, officials in neighboring Uganda began to notice a surging positivity rate from Tanzanian truck drivers. On a single day—May 15—every one of the 43 people who tested positive in the country were Tanzanian truckers crossing the border, forcing the government to close it. Four Tanzanians died at the wheel of their trucks waiting for a test.

In June 2020, Mr. Magufuli confirmed the government had stopped releasing Covid-19 data as of the previous month, including case numbers and deaths, saying it was "fueling public panic." He said figures showing a rise in infections were the result of faulty testing, saying intelligence agents had sent the national laboratory random nonhuman samples of animals and fruits—including a sheep, a goat and a pawpaw—that came out positive. Mr. Magufuli dismissed the national lab chief and installed a loyalist.

The former lab chief didn't respond to calls for comment.

In Dar es Salaam's hospitals, doctors were wrestling with how to treat patients they knew had a disease the government said no longer existed.

"The word Covid-19 was not allowed," said one doctor at Muhimbili National Hospital, the country's largest. Medics were told by health ministry officials to list people with coronavirus symptoms as suffering from acute pneumonia and were instructed to treat them alongside other patients. "We had old men with diabetes in the same ward as Covid suspects...people were dying from lack of treatment," the doctor said.

The health ministry told the public to use the alternative treatments favored by Mr. Magufuli. At Kinondoni hospital, around 5 kilometers from Muhimbili, hundreds of sick people lined up to enter newly constructed steam therapy booths they were told would sweat away the virus. Commercials on state television extolled the virtues of Covidol, an herbal syrup made by the Tanzania Industrial Research and Development Organisation, a government-funded research group.

In July, as thousands of accounts on Tanzanian social media posted videos of the secret government night burials, Mr. Magufuli passed more regulations to control reporting on the pandemic. Any person or institution posting about Covid online would be fined a minimum of \$1,800 or face a minimum of one year in jail.

The government revoked the license of Kwanza TV, an opposition-affiliated broadcaster, citing an Instagram post reporting on a travel alert issued by the U.S. Embassy in Dar es Salaam saying the risk of contracting Covid-19 was extremely high.

“We were summoned, and the entire state apparatus was deployed against us,” said Maria Sarungi, Kwanza TV’s owner, who later fled into exile for fear of retribution. “From that point, the media was basically banned from printing the word ‘Covid-19’ about Tanzania.”

Mr. Magufuli was anxious to make sure the pandemic wouldn’t derail his plans for a second five-year term in elections slated for that October, Tanzanian political analysts said.

His ruling Party of the Revolution, which has controlled Tanzania since the party’s creation in 1977, gathered huge crowds for a nationwide campaign presented as a return to the nationalistic leadership of Julius Nyerere, Tanzania’s founding father and an icon of anti-colonialism in Africa.

Mr. Magufuli campaigned on pledges to resuscitate the national airline, launch a modern railway and revive work on a hydroelectric dam first proposed by Mr. Nyerere in the 1970s. He also railed against the virus, and the vaccines being developed to combat it.

“Vaccinations are dangerous. If the white man was able to come up with vaccinations, he should have found a vaccination for AIDS by now,” he said.

Supported by a pliant media barred from reporting on the virus, Mr. Magufuli won 84% of the vote amid widespread accusations of irregularities. His victory coincided with the beginning of a vicious second wave of the virus.

Doctors afraid to speak

Around the turn of the year, government officials and generals died in quick succession, including Mr. Magufuli’s chief secretary and key political ally, John Kijazi.

Mr. Magufuli, still denying the existence of the virus, had retreated to his ancestral village of Chato, refusing to return to the capital. Reports of deaths became so frequent the word “pole,” Swahili for sorry, trended on Twitter. Father Charles Kitima, secretary of the Tanzania Episcopal Conference, warned of a sharp increase in the number of funerals. The Catholic Church’s leadership in Tanzania said some 30 priests and 60 nuns had died in two months after reporting breathing difficulties.

“I was selling seven or eight every day,” said Kennedy Morris, who runs one of the dozen small roadside kiosks that sell caskets in the Manzese district of Dar es Salaam. “In the pre-pandemic days I would sell two or three.”

By early February, amid rising public panic, Health Minister Dorothy Gwajima called a press conference that looked a lot like a cooking show. Standing with deputies, she drank blended smoothie-like concoctions containing ginger, garlic and lemons to assure the public that the best way to beat acute pneumonia was through natural remedies.

“The government has no plans to receive Covid-19 vaccines that are being distributed in other countries,” Dr. Gwajima said, before covering herself with a blanket to inhale steam from a saucepan of herbs.

Two weeks later, Mr. Magufuli returned to the capital for the first time in almost five months, coinciding with the death of Seif Sharif Hamad, the vice president of Zanzibar, which operates as a semiautonomous state within Tanzania. Mr. Hamad, who wasn’t a member of the ruling party, was the first senior official to admit he had contracted Covid-19. Mr. Magufuli offered his condolences in a statement but didn’t mention the cause of death.

Several days later, Finance Minister Phillip Mpango appeared on state television from a hospital to quash rumors that he, too, had died of Covid-19. “I came to the hospital with my oxygen cylinder but in the last three days I did not use it because my health has improved,” he spluttered, unmasked and sitting next to unmasked doctors, coughing so violently he was barely able to speak. Mr. Mpango recovered and is now Tanzania’s vice president under Ms. Hassan.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus released a statement in February warning Tanzania to take “robust action” and resume collecting and sharing Covid-19 data.

At the Kondo graveyard, Mr. Ali Salum, the caretaker, was clearing more trees to make room for the rising body count. “When we heard the president saying there was no Covid we felt awful,” he said. “How many have died for this lie?”

On Feb. 22, Mr. Magufuli gave another landmark speech at the Dodoma Cathedral, conceding that the virus was still circulating in Tanzania. For the first time, he urged people to wear masks, but only locally manufactured ones. “Foreign masks are dangerous,” he said.

On Feb. 27, he appeared again in public unmasked, laughing and joking at the swearing in ceremony of his new chief secretary, to replace the one who died. It was the last time he would be seen in public alive.

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HEADLINE	11/04 China, India, others seek climate financing
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/climate-finance-china-india-11636039142?mod=hp_lead_pos7
GIST	<p>GLASGOW—Most of the world’s developing countries have backed a demand for wealthy nations to channel at least \$1.3 trillion in climate finance to them annually starting in 2030, the opening salvo in one of the most contentious negotiating topics at the COP26 climate summit.</p> <p>African nations and a group called the Like-Minded Developing Countries, which includes China, India and Indonesia, said in a document they submitted to the United Nations at the summit that half the money should go toward funding renewable energy in the developing world and half toward protecting these countries from the effects of global warming.</p> <p>Developed nations have long pledged to help pay for developing nations to respond to climate change. That promise was crucial to sealing the Paris accord in 2015, when the U.S., Europe and other wealthy countries agreed to provide \$100 billion a year from 2020 through 2025.</p> <p>The \$1.3 trillion target for mobilizing funds reflects the huge investments that will be needed after that to reach the climate targets of the Paris accord, the paper says.</p> <p>“The post 2025 mobilization goal must reflect the ambition, progression and the collective agreement to stay well below 2 (degrees) Celsius and aspire to stay within the 1.5 degree Celsius temperature goal,” the paper says.</p> <p>Developed nations didn’t hit that target in 2020, falling \$20 billion short, and aren’t likely to meet it until 2023, climate negotiators said in a report in October. The shortfall has angered developing nations and complicated the talks in Glasgow.</p>

Return to Top	<p>Western officials say they aren't ready to set a target for climate finance post-2025, given how difficult it has been for them to hit the \$100 billion target. They will only begin the talks at COP26 on a goal for post-2025.</p> <p>"We're not feeling particularly capable now," said one European official. "It's really not the right time."</p> <p>Delegates from China, India and Africa didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.</p> <p>The U.S. and European nations this week announced a \$8.3 billion deal with South Africa to help pay for the country's shift away from coal-fired electricity as part of its plan to slash emissions through 2030.</p> <p>The private sector is also vowing to help the world transition to cleaner energy. Global banks, major investors and insurers, and financial regulators on Wednesday pledged to incorporate carbon emissions into their most fundamental decisions.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 Communities of color: silence of grief
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2021/11/04/communities-of-color-loss-grief-gap/
GIST	<p>Sickness and death were familiar companions of Thecla Xavier long before the arrival of the coronavirus in Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta.</p> <p>Her mother had 12 children. Except for her, each got sick and died — two before age 25, and one at 33 — and now, the 64-year-old is the only one alive. Pneumonia tried to take her son, Joe Xavier, when he was a baby, leaving the infant deprived of oxygen and in and out of hospitals until he was about 3. But years later, it was covid-19 that would ultimately claim him.</p> <p>"Those elders, a long time ago used to say, 'The world's going to change. It is changing. Listen to the world when sickness, any kind of sickness, comes around,'" Thecla Xavier said. "I didn't notice that until one morning last year I went out, and not a sound. No crows. No seagulls. No little birds. No dogs barking. Nothing."</p> <p>In the last 20 months, covid-19 has killed three-quarters-of-a-million people in the United States, meaning an estimated 6.7 million Americans are grieving the death of a grandparent, parent, spouse or child because of the coronavirus, according to researchers.</p> <p>But the nation's bereavement burden has never been equal, and the coronavirus is no exception, targeting Black, Latino, and American Indian and Alaska Native people in their 30s, 40s and 50s with deadly efficiency.</p> <p>Through the first half of the year, among people 40 to 64 years old, covid has killed: One out of every 240 American Indian and Alaska Native people. One out of every 390 Latinos. One out of every 480 Black people. One out of every 1,300 Asian people and White people.</p> <p>In Alaska, with the most Native American people by percent of any state, Indigenous people represent 16 percent of the population but 28 percent of covid-19 deaths, according to the state's most recent figures. White Alaskans, by comparison, represent 65 percent of the population but 48 percent of covid-19 deaths.</p> <p>The coronavirus was slow to come to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, home to more than 25,000 people — most of whom are Alaska Native — living in 58 villages not connected by roads. But after it did, the tribal health organization urged villages to go into a month-long shutdown last November.</p> <p>For families such as Thecla Xavier's, the silence lasted for months.</p>

As Joe-Joe, that's how Thecla Xavier's son was affectionately known, patrolled the streets of Pilot Station, Alaska, ensuring people stayed home and didn't mingle during the pandemic — silence.

As he hopped in his boat and went upriver to fill gunny sacks with punks, clam-shaped fungus that grows on birch trees and is used to make a supercharged chewing tobacco that many consider as much a part of traditional Yup'ik life as moose-hunting and salmon-fishing — silence.

Joe Xavier was a man who loved knocking down wildfires in Alaska and the Lower 48, and volunteering as the village groundskeeper, clearing brush near elders' homes and cutting grass at the cemetery. For years, he helped his brother cut holes in the frozen river and set fishing lines in the icy water below. But last November, the man with boundless energy was feeling achy and needed to rest, so he didn't go.

Five days later, covid-19 killed him at age 37 and nearly killed the youngest of his four sisters.

Still, the silence endured.

"It was so quiet," their mother recalled.

Deaths from covid-19 are causing gaps in grief — gaps that are tragically familiar: Black, American Indian and Alaska Native communities suffer a higher bereavement burden given persistent disparities in life expectancy and mortality.

Native Americans, along with Black Americans, live shorter lives than all other Americans — 78.4 years for Native Americans vs. 80.6 years for White people. For Alaska Native people, life expectancy is 70.4 years, according to the Alaska Native Epidemiology Center.

The shorter life spans reflect a broader disparity: Native Americans have much higher rates of obesity, diabetes, coronary heart disease, chronic liver disease and tuberculosis than White people do.

Yet the gap in grief — with its own health consequences — is often overlooked.

"This population, they're experiencing loss on top of loss on top of loss," said Debra J. Umberson, a sociology professor and director of the Center on Aging and Population Sciences at the University of Texas at Austin. "It's the multiple losses, those repeated hits, that really take a toll."

Umberson had spent her career researching how relationships between friends and family affect health and how the loss of those relationships influences health, writing a book in 2003 about the effect on adults when a parent dies.

But the course of her research changed nearly a decade later with the death of Trayvon Martin, a Black Florida teen killed by a man of White and Hispanic heritage. The death of a child is one of the most devastating experiences someone can go through, and she said "watching Trayvon's parents and just seeing how the grief was affecting them got me to wondering" if Black parents were more likely to lose their children than White parents.

"I just started trying to look up the statistics. I figured they were out there," she said. But when she looked, she couldn't find data chronicling how some groups were hit more heavily by bereavement than others.

"So I decided to go out and figure it out for myself with the best data I could find," Umberson said.

What she found was that Black Americans are at greater risk of experiencing the death of a mother, father, sibling, spouse and child than White Americans — and they experience those losses earlier in life.

Black children are more than three times as likely to lose their mother by age 10. Black parents are 2½ times more likely to lose a child by age 30, a gap that nearly doubles for Black parents as they age. Black

adults between 50 and 80 are four times as likely to lose a child. Black couples are more than twice as likely to lose a spouse by age 60.

Black families are also more likely to experience multiple losses. By age 30, Black people are three times more likely to experience the loss of two or more family members. By age 60, Black people are twice as likely to have lost at least four family members.

“We actually wanted to include Native populations when we were looking at the unequal burden of loss, but it’s harder to get good data,” Umberson said of her findings, published in the *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* in 2017. “But the statistics on mortality and life expectancy, if you look at those and you extrapolate, they’re going to be even worse for Native populations.”

Numerous villages in Alaska have no road access, no running water or sewage service, no neighbors for miles. A gallon of milk can cost more than \$10. Yet the median household income in the area, though it varies by village, is as low as \$32,750. Hunting and harvesting help people survive.

“For Native people, we’re used to people dying around us. That shouldn’t be normal. But it is,” said Abigail Echo-Hawk, executive vice president at the Seattle Indian Health Board and director of the Urban Indian Health Institute.

“We’re Native people living in a country that has been attempting to eliminate us for more than 500 years,” Echo-Hawk said. “This ongoing, generational grief is what we call historical trauma within communities. We’re seeing that right now.”

The coronavirus has created a new generation exposed to unimaginable loss. One out of every 500 children has lost a parent to the pandemic, a figure that varies widely when broken down by race and ethnicity:

One out of every 168 American Indian and Alaska Native children has lost a parent to covid-19. One out of every 310 Black children. One out of every 412 Hispanic children. One out of every 612 Asian children. One out of every 753 White children.

There have been chasms between the health status of Indigenous people and others since European settlers arrived in the Americas more than 500 years ago. Colonizers, missionaries and public health experts have, over the years, invoked wide-ranging causes that often blamed the victims in the name of land theft and genocide — divine providence, genetics, unhealthy behaviors, unclean living conditions, a failure to adapt.

In the beginning days of the pandemic, Echo-Hawk’s health clinic was sent body bags instead of personal protective equipment, known as PPE. It was, she said, emblematic of what American Indian and Alaska Native communities experience.

“They’ll give us things to bury our people in but not the things to ensure they live,” she said. “We’re tired of body bags.”

It has been nearly a year since Thecla Xavier sat by her children’s bedsides at the village health clinic. Her Joe-Joe arrived on a slushy, slippery and windy November day. He was breathless and panting, the virus suffocating the red blood cells that deliver oxygen. Blood oxygen levels below about 90 percent are cause for concern. His family said his fluctuated between 30 and 50 percent.

A day later, his 33-year-old sister, Nastasia, who has two young children, checked into the clinic, her health deteriorating. The weather was too bad for planes or helicopters to land, so they were forced to wait until conditions improved. And they did — hours after Joe took his last breath, at 1:25 a.m.

“We had to put him in a bag. No coffin. Just put him in a bag with his same clothes,” Thecla Xavier said. “We couldn’t bring him home. We couldn’t change him. We couldn’t pray for him.”

He was buried that evening.

It was so quiet, almost too quiet. Thecla cried until she could cry no more, saying, “I had no regrets for him.”

While mourning her son, Thecla prayed she wouldn’t have to bury her daughter, who was urgently transferred on a medical aircraft “after my Joe went.” Nastasia first was flown nearly 90 miles to Bethel, then Anchorage and finally Seattle, where she remained in intensive care for 50 days as multiple organs began to fail. Her heart. Her lungs. Her kidney.

Then, miraculously, she recovered.

The storm inside

The death of a family member is one of the most stressful events most Americans will experience. The trauma of loss sets in motion a host of reactions that conspire to trigger dysregulation of body systems. Changes in financial status; loss of health insurance; moving; switching schools; self-soothing through food, drugs, alcohol; and hyper vigilance about what’s to come. They pile on top of each other, taking a toll.

It’s an experience researchers say most Americans rarely encounter until midlife or later. That’s not the case for Black Americans, American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Mothers and fathers. Sons and daughters. Brothers and sisters. Husbands and wives. Grandparents. Gone. And the coronavirus is amplifying a burden that was already too much to bear.

Limited research shows experiencing multiple losses — the repeated shock to the system — can lead to stress so corrosive it changes bodies.

Stress is a physiological reaction, hard-wired. At the first sign of danger, the brain sounds an alarm, setting off a torrent of neurological and hormonal signals that flood the bloodstream. Overexposure to those hormones wears down the body, causing it to become sicker and age quicker, or “weather.”

The pandemic “is a weathering event,” Thomas A. LaVeist, dean of the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, said.

It was Cynthia Ivan’s mother who died first, just before the pandemic began. Then covid-19 took her grandmother, grandfather and cousin a year later. And just last month, her uncle from cancer. But all of it feels like a blur to the 35-year-old.

Ivan’s mother died in November of 2019. She’d been kicked out of a motel in Bethel where she was drinking with her husband, her daughter said. It was the middle of the night and temperatures were well below freezing.

A year later, like many villages in Alaska’s Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, theirs, Akiak, didn’t lock down during the early months of the pandemic. So, she said, when there was a death — not from covid-19 — the entire community gathered as it traditionally does. Then came time for the one-year memorial feast for Ivan’s 61-year-old mother.

“Shortly after, there was a positive case, and I was like ‘Good, Lord! The whole village is going to be positive,’ ” Ivan said.

And it nearly was. Two days before her 84-year-old grandmother, Lucy Ivan, died, the village and the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation determined there was widespread community transmission of the coronavirus. Lucy Ivan died of covid-19 in November at home, cared for by her sons and daughter, all of whom had covid as well.

They were the ones who handled her body, placing her in two body bags that came with instructions. They placed her in a coffin, nailed it shut, carried her out of the home, drove her to the cemetery.

Her children and grandchildren who didn't live in the house had just a two-minute visit to see her, clad in full protective gear.

There was no wake, no funeral. The pastor did the burial on speaker phone.

"When an elder passes, the elder takes with them all their traditional knowledge that they've carried with them all their life," Ivan said. Her grandmother took the secret to preparing porcupine. "I couldn't handle the smell," she said of the prickly creatures.

But more than that, her grandmother's death meant the loss of something more existential, Yuuyaraq: "It's the way of a human being, or how a person should be," Ivan explained. "From when we're very young, we're taught how to be a person, how to respect a person. It's not something you can be told. You have to watch how she loved."

The absence of that love made Ivan numb. Her aunt asked her to share their experience on Facebook, hoping to spare others from the numbing pain. Alcohol helped her cope. She spent the next month drunk, losing nearly 40 pounds and ending up in the hospital twice. Her blood pressure spiked. Her heartbeat became irregular.

She didn't get to say goodbye to her grandfather, who she said mushed in the first Iditarod and died of covid-19, because she was drinking.

"My mom and then my gram's deaths really did something to me," she said. The pleading tears of her 19-year-old sister helped pull her back from the brink.

The human body isn't designed to withstand such biological and emotional assaults.

"These are the types of traumas that chip away at your resilience," LaVeist said. "And people of color have to be more resilient because we face more trauma."

But the well of resilience is only so deep.

"If you're constantly dipping into that well, sooner or later that well runs dry," he said.

The coronavirus is adding death and disrupting death rituals. Compounding the trauma is the gruesome nature of the disease, which spares none of the body's systems in severe cases.

Ashton M. Verdery, associate professor of sociology and demography at Pennsylvania State University, said he has a paper going into review that analyzes survey data on 50,000 Europeans collected as the pandemic began surging. It includes people whose loved ones died of covid-19 and from reasons other than the virus.

"Our results do suggest that it is the case that covid deaths are likely affecting people more strongly, which would suggest that this could create some longer downstream health challenges," he said.

Cynthia Notti was with her little brother when he took his last breaths Aug. 30 at Fairbanks Memorial Hospital. She'd driven in from Anchorage, staying several days, and when she left, her brother was still talking. She flew back a day later, and the situation had changed.

"The nurses said, 'We need to warn you about what you're going to see,' " she said. "When I walked in, he already had the rattle. Short breaths."

Notti called her 88-year-old father right away and gave him the news: The oldest of his five sons was going to die. He started to cry.

“The last time I saw him crying was when my grandmother passed away — and that was 2003,” she said.

Then, she put the phone up to her brother’s ear, so their father could say goodbye to his 54-year-old son, Joseph Notti.

She was there when her brother’s wife told their four children, the youngest just 14.

They cremated his body, she said, because the village where he wanted to be buried was on shutdown. Tyonek, Alaska, is where his wife of more than 25 years grew up. It’s where they met. It’s one of the places where the man with a heart for service worked as a village public safety officer.

A service was held in Fairbanks where Notti lived with his family, with plans to scatter his ashes in Tyonek another time.

“I did the eulogy for Joey’s funeral, and I said Joey’s not alone,” his sister said in a recent phone interview on the sixth anniversary of their mother’s death from a stroke. “I just know they are up there playing Scrabble with my grandmother.”

Each family member is dealing with Joe Notti’s death differently. His wife, who still expects to get her regular 4 p.m. text message from him, is mad her unvaccinated husband didn’t take his symptoms more seriously. Cynthia Notti’s father visits more often and stays longer.

A week after her 14-year-old nephew lost his father from covid-19, his best friend’s father died, too.

“We still can’t wrap our minds around it,” Notti said.

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HEADLINE	11/04 UN: shortfalls in climate finance
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2021/11/04/adaptation-gap-report-cop26-un/
GIST	<p>As climate disasters intensify and the prospects for avoiding even more catastrophic warming grow dim, U.N. experts say the world must spend five to 10 times more helping vulnerable people adapt to inevitable environmental upheaval.</p> <p>Already, millions are suffering amid prolonged droughts, catastrophic wildfires, chronic flooding and worsening storms brought about by rising temperatures. The threats will only intensify if emissions continue along their current trajectory, heating up the Earth by an estimated 2.7 degrees Celsius (4.9 degrees Fahrenheit) by the end of the century.</p> <p>“Climate change is happening, impacts are increasing now and today, and we’re going to be committed to these growing impacts for the foreseeable future, as long as we can actually imagine,” said Henry Neufeldt, chief editor of the United Nations Environment Program’s Adaptation Gap Report.</p> <p>“Adaptation is necessary,” he said, “even if we stopped emissions today.”</p> <p>But emissions have not stopped. Research released Wednesday by the Global Carbon Project shows that greenhouse gas pollution has almost completely rebounded after slumping during the coronavirus pandemic, powered by the surging use of natural gas and coal.</p> <p>The Adaptation Gap Report, which was unveiled Thursday at the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland, reflects a crystallizing reality: The world is increasingly unlikely to meet the ambitious goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) above preindustrial levels. And that means humanity will not avoid the catastrophic consequences of further warming.</p>

“People need to prepare for a lot more,” said Corinne Le Quéré, a climate scientist at the University of East Anglia who was not part of the adaptation gap research. “You need to mitigate for 1.5 degrees and prepare for 3 degrees, essentially.”

By the middle of the century, according to the report, the adaptation needs of the developing world could reach \$500 billion a year. Currently, global annual spending on adaptation is about \$46 billion, the United Nations says.

There are some signs of progress. Roughly 4 out of 5 countries have adopted a national adaptation policy or strategy. More and more governments are reaching out to communities and coordinating with the private sector to prepare for rising risks.

But it is still not enough, experts say. Just 14 percent of public spending on climate is directed toward adaptation, according to the report. In the wake of the covid-19 pandemic, most countries have not dedicated any of their economic stimulus spending to projects that would help them cope with environmental change.

Yet the pandemic left many vulnerable countries buried in large external debts, with few resources to prepare for the environmental crises that are already starting to take hold. Meanwhile, wealthy nations have not yet fulfilled a decade-old pledge to provide low-income countries with \$100 billion per year for climate initiatives. A [delivery plan](#) presented by Canadian and German environmental ministers said that the funding target would probably not be reached until 2023, three years behind schedule.

Frustration about the shortfall in climate finance and despair over the escalating toll of climate disasters have pushed the issue of adaptation into the spotlight at COP26.

Representatives of vulnerable countries, along with civil society groups and the U.N. secretary general himself, have called for the world’s wealthy to not only fulfill their financial pledges, but to make sure half of those funds go toward helping people adjust to a warmer and more dangerous world.

“This has been a cry from developing countries for a long time now,” said Harjeet Singh, a New Delhi-based senior adviser for Climate Action Network International. “We cannot leave people unprepared for disasters. We cannot leave people on their own who are already facing a climate emergency.”

Singh has worked on adaptation initiatives in countries including India and Malawi. He has seen how elevating homes can protect people from flooding and how understanding seed diversity can help farmers cope with drought. Early-warning systems for approaching severe weather can let growers know when to harvest their crops and mean the difference between starvation and survival, he said.

“Lots of innovation and experimentation has been happening in the Global South,” he said. “It is just that they are not able to scale that up because of a lack of resources.”

The Adaptation Gap Report suggests that areas in greatest need of investment are agriculture and infrastructure, followed by water and disaster risk management. Health programs are also drastically underfunded.

Neufeldt, who heads the Impact Assessment and Adaptation Analysis program at a partnership between the U.N. Environment Program and the Technical University of Denmark, said it can be difficult to solicit funds for adaptation projects because they do not offer obvious ways to gain a return on investment.

There are also few initiatives to assess whether these efforts are working. Only a quarter of countries have adopted an evaluation system for their adaptation projects, though a further 36 percent have such a system in development.

U.N. Environment Program executive director Inger Andersen said the world must find ways to reduce the debt incurred by developing countries, such as providing assistance in the form of grants or guaranteeing them access to low-interest loans. The economic toll of the pandemic has only exacerbated the issue.

“It has been very difficult for them to just meet their normal fiscal burden,” she said, “in addition to the health burden, in addition to social cost of supporting people who are no longer working, in addition to loss of revenue.”

“They are squeezed on all sides,” she said. “That leaves very little fiscal space for additional expenditure on adaptation.”

Supporting adaptation in the developing world is in everyone’s best interest, advocates say. Neufeldt pointed out that failure to prepare for increasing climate risks could lead to “maladaptation,” or actions that worsen climate impacts by increasing greenhouse gas emissions.

Sonam Wangdi, who chairs a group known as the Least Developed Countries, said the 46 nations in that bloc represent more than 1 billion people but are responsible for less than 1 percent of global emissions.

His own nation of Bhutan is carbon negative, and its constitution requires that at least 60 percent of its land remained as conserved forest.

“We have done so much, but we are not protected from the impacts of climate change,” Wangdi said Wednesday at a news conference in Glasgow, noting that melting glaciers in the Himalayan nation can create dangerous high-altitude lakes that then burst and cause catastrophic flooding.

“There is not much we can do. So we have a climate crisis at hand,” he said.

That is why his country and others are so determined to make sure that the developed world actually funds adaptation initiatives, as it has promised to do.

“For us, our lives depend on decisions that are made here in Glasgow,” he said. “Our lives will depend on the commitments that are made here.”

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HEADLINE	11/03 Ithaca NY: decarbonize every building
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-solutions/2021/11/03/ithaca-new-york-decarbonize-electrify/
GIST	<p>Late Wednesday night, the city of Ithaca, N.Y., voted to electrify and decarbonize its buildings. It’s the first such initiative of its kind in the country.</p> <p>“We are being very aggressive,” said Luis Aguirre-Torres, Ithaca’s director of sustainability. “I’m very excited but, at the same time, it’s a lot of work ahead.”</p> <p>The city of about 30,000 people consists of some 6,000 homes and buildings. Decarbonization would involve looking at everything from how a building is heated to what appliances it uses, with the aim of moving away from the consumption of fossil fuels such as oil and natural gas.</p> <p>“It’s a project for the whole city, not just municipal buildings,” said Aguirre-Torres.</p> <p>Buildings account for nearly 40 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in the United States. Ithaca’s initiative is projected to cut about that much from the city’s overall carbon footprint — saving approximately 160,000 tons of carbon dioxide. That’s the equivalent of the emissions from about 35,000 cars driven for a year.</p>

“There isn’t a single day where I don’t worry about what climate change means for our kids,” said [Donnel Baird](#), a founder of BlocPower, a Brooklyn-based company focused on “greening” aging buildings. Ithaca chose BlocPower to manage its initiative. Baird said the vote has marked a milestone.

“The hardest part is finding the city with the courage to make the commitment.”

“To me, the hardest part is done,” he said. “The hardest part is finding the city with the courage to make the commitment.”

Ithaca’s common council voted unanimously in favor of this latest move, which is part of the broader Green New Deal that [the city approved in 2019](#). That measure calls for the city government to meet all of its electricity needs with renewable energy by 2025, as well as reduce its vehicle emissions by half. Most ambitiously, though, it set a goal of being a carbon-neutral city by the end of the decade.

Aguirre-Torres said the city lost precious time to the coronavirus pandemic, which effectively shrank the timeline from 10 years to eight. “I had to come up with a very aggressive strategy,” he said.

The decarbonization effort is officially called the Efficiency Retrofit and Thermal Load Electrification Program. Building improvements could range from swapping natural gas and propane cooking stoves with electric induction cooktops to installing solar panels.

Timur Dogan, a professor at Cornell University, which is located in Ithaca and is consulting with the city on the project, said researchers are working on modeling to help inform what buildings to tackle first. But the program is broadly slated to unfold in two phases — the first covering 1,600 buildings and then another 4,400.

The goal, Aguirre-Torres said, is to reach full building decarbonization by 2030 and have the first phase done in the next three years. Baird said that may take closer to four or five years but is certainly achievable. He pointed to BlocPower’s work in Brooklyn as proof, saying that the company retrofitted more than 1,000 apartments there in under two years.

“We have the track record,” said Baird.

Dogan said the timeline is “ambitious” but is technically feasible. “The technology we’re talking about implementing here is already off the shelf and readily available,” he said. “It’s a matter of political will and financial means to make this happen.”

The city, whose total budget is only about \$80 million, is turning to the private sector to fund its [building decarbonization effort](#). The idea, said Aguirre-Torres, is to fund the program using private equity and then help reduce the costs of the capital via state and federal incentives, as well as manufacturer rebates. The city would also establish a fund that, bolstered by philanthropic donations, would further help lower the cost of the program, especially for low-income households.

“It would be equivalent to having zero percent interest,” he said, adding that the city has already raised the \$100 million it needs for Phase 1. If that progresses well, it would then start looking for the additional \$450 million necessary to cover the projected costs of Phase 2, he said.

“I don’t look at this as an environmental issue,” said Aguirre-Torres. “It’s an economic issue that can be solved with creative financing schemes.”

Ithaca is far from the only place championing climate mitigation and adaptation plans. Facing rising temperatures, [Miami has appointed a chief heat officer](#). In New York City, the mayor has [an office dedicated to climate resiliency](#). In northwest Canada, the [Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation declared a climate emergency and is also targeting net-zero by 2030](#).

	<p>Aside from buildings, Aguirre-Torres said transportation and the electric grid are Ithaca's other significant sources of emissions. And, from aiming to double rooftop solar to developing a program to get used electric vehicles in the hands of low-income people, his plans are no less ambitious.</p> <p>"I believe that all of this is possible," he said. "We can be a replicable model for a lot of places."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 Seattle strain: mandate-related staffing
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/city-of-seattle-employees-departments-feeling-strain-from-vaccine-mandate-related-staffing/
GIST	<p>Seattle's vaccine mandate has left hundreds of exempted unvaccinated city employees on leave for over two weeks, exacerbating staffing shortages in major departments and drawing criticism from impacted employees.</p> <p>Mayor Jenny Durkan required all city employees working on-site to be vaccinated against COVID-19 by Oct. 18. While well over 90% of employees got vaccinated and continued to work normally, more than 500 others received or applied for religious or medical exemption and are on leave, hoping for accommodations to keep their jobs.</p> <p>As of Monday, the departments with the most employees on leave were the Seattle Police Department with 100; Seattle City Light with 82, Seattle Public Utilities with 70, and the Seattle Fire Department with 55.</p> <p>For departments like SFD, where 5% of its staff is on leave from the mandate, the order is applying new pressure to an already strained staff.</p> <p>"It's important to understand that when we walked into this mandate after Oct. 18, we weren't 100% staffed, so that plays into the challenges," Chief Harold Scoggins said last week, noting the department had about 75 vacancies before the mandate.</p> <p>Including those vacancies, and the roughly 29 people scheduled off on a given day and the 10-30 firefighters on leave at any given time due to injuries or other circumstances, the department aims to staff 220 firefighters in a given day.</p> <p>"So all of these things come into the mix every single day before we even walk into the mandate," Scoggins said. "And then ... if we just look over the last month I think we have over 30 events that we have staffed around the city, and that's everything from the [University of Washington] Husky games to the Seahawks, to the end of the Mariners season, to the Kraken, to concerts."</p> <p>So far, Scoggins says, the department has managed to meet its obligations by his staff working voluntary overtime.</p> <p>According to SFD, the department's staff worked an average of more than 11,000 hours of overtime each week over a four-week period from Sept. 28-Oct. 25. The number increased each of the four weeks, starting at 10,433 and climbing to 11,601.</p> <p>But Scoggins says the amount of hours remaining staff members are having to work to compensate for the shortage is not sustainable.</p> <p>"It's been an exhausting 20 months for our folks because, if you remember, we never stopped coming in. We never worked from home," Scoggins said.</p> <p>And even still, the department has had as many as 10 units out of service on any given day in those four weeks, and is preparing to address any drop-off in voluntary overtime or further understaffing.</p>

Similarly, SPD has switched to an emergency staffing model to accommodate the 100 employees — 93 of whom are sworn officers — on leave in the exemption process.

“While we work to reach 100% vaccination compliance within the Seattle Police Department, there may be some impacts to our service levels, especially given our loss in staffing over the past two years,” SPD said in a written statement after the mandate went into effect.

According to a spokesperson for the department, SPD is currently under a Stage 3 emergency mobilization in response to the number of officers on leave, which can result in “a full deployment of all on-duty sworn personnel, including Investigations and other non-uniformed section personnel,” according to the SPD manual.

“To that end, the department has developed a series of plans to provide the best level of service, including augmenting patrol staffing with officers from the Community Response Group first, before detectives and other non-patrol sworn employees are asked to return to the streets,” the statement continued.

The current state of staffing drew criticism from the Seattle Police Officers Guild last week, as the union filed an Unfair Labor Practice complaint with the Washington State Public Employment Relations Commission, accusing the city of not allowing proper bargaining in the mandate process and requesting covered employees be allowed to return to “status quo.”

Durkan’s office declined to address SPOG’s complaint multiple times, but doubled down on the importance of vaccinations.

“The mayor said very clearly before that she thinks vaccinations are important and you can’t work safely without vaccination,” Durkan’s chief of staff, Stephanie Formas, said in a phone interview Friday.

Durkan signed an emergency order late Friday that provides hiring bonuses of up to \$25,000 for laterally hired and \$10,000 for newly hired officers and staff to the SPD and the Community Safety and Communications Center (CSCC).

But some of those employees facing leave or termination see the move by Durkan as hypocritical.

Marina Shinderuk, who has worked in CSCC for over 13 years and received a religious exemption from the mandate, said Friday she was told she would not be accommodated to work remotely.

Shinderuk says the mayor’s hiring bonuses are a “slap in the face” for those who have lost or may lose their jobs over the vaccination mandate.

“The city citing ‘undue hardship’ as the reason for denying accommodations for those who were granted exemptions and then offering the incentives for new hires while we’re still waiting to be fired is a travesty,” Shinderuk said Wednesday.

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HEADLINE	11/04 Large companies' vax deadline: Jan 4
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/04/business/stock-market-news#biden-vaccine-mandate-osh
GIST	<p>The Biden administration said on Thursday that large companies have until Jan. 4 to ensure that their workforces are fully vaccinated under a sweeping new coronavirus health measure that will cover 84 million private sector workers.</p> <p>The plan was first announced in September by President Biden, who directed the Labor Department to invoke its emergency powers over the safety of workplaces to require businesses with 100 or more employees to mandate vaccinations for all employees. Workers who refuse to get vaccinated must undergo weekly testing.</p>

Also on Thursday, the administration unveiled new emergency regulations for health care workers, including those at nursing homes caring for elderly and sick residents who are at high risk for infection. All 17 million workers at health care facilities receiving either Medicare or Medicaid funding must be vaccinated by Jan. 4.

Mr. Biden has previously imposed vaccine requirements on [federal workers](#) and companies that receive federal contracts.

But the new rule covering employees of all large private businesses is a more dramatic use of his executive power, prompting some state officials to criticize the move and threaten to try to stop it.

Some major companies including [Tyson Foods](#) and [United Airlines](#) were quick to embrace mandates, spurred by the president's announcement in September. But many others have held off, citing the need for clarification from the government on a range of questions, including who will pay for testing and whether the rule applies to employees who work at home.

Many of those questions are answered by the new requirements and guidance published by the [Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#) on Thursday. Companies that had been waiting for the final rules to be made public are expected to begin announcing mandates, experts said.

Among the businesses that have yet to issue a requirement for all employees are the nation's largest employer, [Walmart](#), which is mandating vaccines mainly for its corporate staff members, and [JPMorgan Chase](#), which has more than 120,000 employees in offices and bank branches across the United States and is encouraging but not broadly mandating vaccinations.

In a [Mercer poll](#) of 1,088 companies conducted on Oct. 4, roughly 13 percent of respondents said they were requiring all employees to be vaccinated, regardless of work location. Eleven percent said they were requiring only those coming to the office to be vaccinated.

According to OSHA's new requirements, workers are considered fully vaccinated if they've received two doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech or Moderna vaccines, or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Companies must provide paid-time off for their employees to get vaccinated and sick leave for side effects as needed. And employers are not required to either pay for or provide tests, though some may still be compelled to do so by other laws or agreements with unions.

Companies that fail to comply with the rule may be subject to fines, depending on how frequently they violate it and whether violations are intentional, a White House official said. An [OSHA penalty](#) is typically \$13,653 for every serious violation.

Over the past month, the Department of Labor [received feedback](#) on the rule from trade groups, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, as well as executives from UPS, the Walt Disney Company, Fidelity Investments and many others. They have voiced concerns about cost, logistics and potential impact on employees.

Requiring vaccines or regular testing "could significantly diminish the labor pool, particularly in some geographic areas and amongst some demographics in which vaccine hesitancy is widespread," the National Retail Federation wrote to OSHA last month. "NRF members, like employers across the economy, are already struggling to find workers."

The January deadline allows retailers and logistics companies, both of which are strapped for employees, to get through the holiday shopping season before instituting the requirements. The same deadline applies to federal contractors, who are subject to their own stricter rules, and to health care workers covered by new emergency regulations.

Companies that have already mandated vaccines, including [3M](#), [Procter & Gamble](#), IBM and the airlines [American, Alaska and JetBlue](#), have not seen a large number of employees quit over the pressure to get inoculated, though a small minority of workers [have given up their jobs](#).

United Airlines, one of the first major air carriers to require shots for its 67,000 U.S. employees, said in September that more than 99 percent of its employees were vaccinated. [Tyson Foods](#), which set a Nov. 1 deadline, said that more than 96 percent of employees were vaccinated, compared with less than 50 percent before it announced its mandate in August.

Employers covered by the rule must ensure their unvaccinated workers are masked, a requirement that must be enforced starting Dec. 5. They will be required to maintain reporting and record-keeping as detailed in the OSHA rules. OSHA will help companies understand how to comply with the new requirements by distributing fact sheets, sample methods and other plans, a White House official said. It will also provide companies with a recorded webinar on the rule's details, along with recommendations for enacting them.

Legal experts say OSHA has the authority to introduce a vaccine mandate, and that its standards pre-empt the existing rules of state governments, except in states that have their own OSHA-approved workplace agencies. ([About half do](#).) Those state agencies, which OSHA monitors, are required to enact a rule that is at least as effective as the OSHA rule.

The administration drafted the OSHA guidelines with potential challenges in mind. Attorneys general in at least 24 states have [threatened to sue](#). Montana has [outlawed](#) employer vaccine mandates, and Gov. Asa Hutchinson of Arkansas allowed a law to go into effect [requiring](#) that employers who mandate vaccines allow for exemptions. Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas issued an executive order banning private employers from making vaccine mandates.

So far, efforts to challenge vaccine mandates have fallen short. The Supreme Court last Friday [refused to block](#) Maine's requirement that health care workers be [vaccinated](#) against the coronavirus notwithstanding their religious objections. A federal judge in Boston [denied](#) efforts to overturn a vaccination mandate [for 1,600 state executive branch employees](#)

Vaccination requirements are not a new phenomenon in the United States, but such requirements in the workplace are less tested than those in schools and the military. And some companies might look to legal challenges as a way to delay creating a vaccine or testing requirement.

Some companies have already taken a stance on other required coronavirus precautions. In-N-Out, the popular burger chain in California, was [forced to close](#) its only San Francisco outlet after failing to comply with the city's requirement that all restaurants check the vaccine cards of indoor diners.

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HEADLINE	11/04 Britain approves Covid antiviral pill
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2021/11/04/world/covid-delta-variant-vaccine#uk-merck-pill-molnupiravir
GIST	<p>Britain on Thursday approved the antiviral drug molnupiravir to treat the coronavirus, making it the first antiviral pill to be endorsed by a public health body for use in Covid patients. Experts have said that the pill could offer fresh promise in combating the coronavirus, and its approval by the medicines regulator marks a major step.</p> <p>The drug can be taken orally, which marks it apart from other treatments, such as remdesivir, which must be administered intravenously. The pill form makes it easier to treat the virus outside of a hospital, combating symptoms before they become severe.</p> <p>A large clinical trial showed that molnupiravir halved the risk of hospitalization and death in high-risk Covid patients who took the drug soon after infection, raising hopes internationally that the pill would be a new way to combat the virus.</p>

Molnupiravir, developed by Merck and Ridgeback Biotherapeutics, has been submitted for emergency authorization to the Food and Drug Administration in the United States, which will host a public meeting to review the application at the end of November. But even before the pill was approved by most regulators, wealthy nations have been scrambling to negotiate deals to buy the drug.

Last month, Merck announced a licensing deal to allow molnupiravir to be made and sold cheaply in dozens of developing nations.

The decision on Thursday to approve the drug for use in Britain was made after a “rigorous review” of its “safety, quality and effectiveness,” according to the statement from the watchdog, the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency.

Britain’s regulator authorized the drug for both vaccinated and unvaccinated people who have at least one factor that would put them at high risk for becoming severely ill from the virus. In the clinical trial, the most common risk factors were being over 60 years old or having obesity or diabetes.

[Dr. June Raine, the agency’s chief, said](#) that scientists and clinicians were satisfied that the pill was “safe and effective for those at risk of developing severe Covid-19.”

The drug “is another therapeutic to add to our armory,” Dr. Raine noted in the statement.

Trial research has suggested that the pill is likely to be most effective when taken during the early stages of infection.

Sajid Javid, the British health secretary, described the approval as a “historic day” for the country. “This will be a game changer for the most vulnerable and the immunosuppressed, who will soon be able to receive the groundbreaking treatment,” he said.

The British regulatory agency recommends administering the drug as soon as possible after a positive coronavirus test and within five days of the onset of symptoms.

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HEADLINE	11/04 Tyson effort highlights corporate mandate
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/04/business/tyson-vaccine-mandate.html
GIST	<p>SPRINGDALE, Ark. — When Tyson, one of the world’s largest meatpacking companies, announced in early August that all of its 120,000 workers would need to be vaccinated against the coronavirus or lose their jobs, Diana Eike was angry. Ms. Eike, an administrative coordinator at the company, had resisted the vaccine, and not for religious or political reasons like many others here in her home state.</p> <p>“It was just something personal,” she said.</p> <p>Now, Ms. Eike is fully vaccinated, and she is relieved that Tyson made the decision for her. The company, she said, “took the burden off of me making the choice.”</p> <p>Across the country, workers have reacted to vaccine mandates with a mix of emotions. Employer requirements are taking effect without major controversy in many areas. But in some cities, government workers have marched through the streets in protest, while others have quit. Numerous companies, fearing a wave of resignations, have hesitated on mandates, even as they struggled with new coronavirus outbreaks.</p> <p>Tyson’s announcement that it would require vaccinations across its corporate offices, packing houses and poultry plants, many of which are situated in the South and Midwest where resistance to the vaccines is high, was arguably the boldest mandate in the corporate world.</p>

“We made the decision to do the mandate, fully understanding that we were putting our business at risk,” Tyson’s chief executive, Donnie King, said in an interview last week. “This was very painful to do.”

But it was also bad for business when Tyson had to shut facilities because of virus outbreaks. Since announcing the policy, roughly 60,500 employees have received the vaccine, and more than 96 percent of its work force is vaccinated.

Tyson’s experience shows how vaccine mandates in the workplace can be persuasive. It comes as the [Biden administration set a Jan. 4 deadline](#) requiring vaccines — or weekly testing — at companies with 100 or more workers.

Tyson’s aggressive push on vaccines also marks a significant turn for a company that had been criticized early in the pandemic for failing to adequately protect workers in its plants. Its low-wage workers typically stand elbow-to-elbow to do the work of cutting, deboning and packing meat, making them particularly vulnerable to the airborne virus.

Tyson, like other large meatpackers, lobbied the Trump administration in 2020 to issue an executive order that essentially allowed plants to stay open despite rising infections. The move followed a warning from Tyson’s chairman, John Tyson, [of a meat shortage](#) in the United States, even as the company and other meatpackers were exporting more pork to China than before the pandemic, [an investigation by The New York Times found](#).

A recent [congressional report](#) found that 151 Tyson employees died of the virus. The report said that at a plant in Amarillo, Texas, inspectors observed that many employees were working with “saturated” masks. At a pork plant in Waterloo, Iowa, as dozens of workers fell ill and three died, local officials, including the county sheriff, said [the company initially refused their requests](#) to shut down the plant in the spring of 2020.

Tyson says it has spent more than \$810 million on Covid safety measures and new on-site medical services. It conducted plant-wide coronavirus testing and [hired its first chief medical officer](#).

And the vaccines brought a new tool to protect employees — while keeping the company’s plants open.

“This was a business decision,” Stuart Appelbaum, president of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, which represents thousands of workers at Tyson’s poultry plants, said of the mandate. “There isn’t enough of a supply of workers to take the place if a large number of workers are getting sick.”

Mr. King began to consider a mandate during his July 4 vacation — “the worst vacation of my life,” he said — as the Delta variant surged throughout the country. He was only a month into the job, having unexpectedly taken over in June as Tyson’s fifth chief executive in five years. Mr. King wears a red heart on his jacket inspired by the book “Love Works,” encouraging managers to “lead with love.”

Most corporate executives do not like to be first to take bold actions, or to do so without data to support them. Tyson rolled out the requirements when the [handful of companies announcing mandates](#) were focused largely on office workers — who were [statistically more likely to be vaccinated](#) than factory employees.

Upon his return from vacation, Mr. King convened the Tyson leadership team for two weeks of discussion. The company consulted with outside experts, including the Centers for Disease Control, infectious disease specialists and emergency room professionals.

It modeled what vaccination rate it thought it could achieve and how many employees might quit. “We literally counted the cost,” Mr. King said.

By then, the company had been talking to its workers for the six months since vaccines first became available, trying to understand what made the nearly half of them who hadn't been vaccinated resistant to it.

"We already knew this vaccine was very polarizing in the community," said Mr. King. "Part of it is religious, part of it is medical concerns — but part of it is, 'I just simply don't want you telling me what to do.'"

Tyson's work force is extraordinarily diverse: There are Burmese refugees, immigrants from the Pacific islands and many Black and Hispanic employees working across the company's pork, beef and poultry plants. The company asked physicians serving specific ethnic communities to talk with employees in groups or individually about the safety of the vaccine.

At a plant in Camilla, Ga., Dextrea Dennard, a member of the Retail, Wholesale Department Store Union, was initially upset that Tyson mandated vaccination. "I felt like our rights were being violated," she said.

Ms. Dennard had seen the effect of the disease up close. Her brother had contracted the virus early on in the pandemic and was on a ventilator for 30 days. A number of workers died at the plant where she worked, a 15-minute drive away in Albany, [one of the early epicenters of the outbreak](#).

"In my community, you know, we have a lot of deaths," Ms. Dennard said. "I thought about what my brother had went through and overcame — and I just felt like it was time for me to do what I needed to do, as far as for my daughter, who's 10 years old, who can't be vaccinated."

Ms. Dennard decided to get vaccinated after talking with a physician the company brought in to discuss his time treating Covid-19 patients.

"And once I got it, a lot of my co-workers that was feeling kind of funny about it — they got it later," she said.

Others never got the shot. Monday was the last day on the job for Calvin Miller, who worked in dry storage at a Tyson plant in Sedalia, Mo., where the local vaccination rate [is 46 percent](#). Mr. Miller, who worked for Tyson for 12 years, said he felt "betrayed" by the mandate: "A lot of good workers and longtime workers lost their jobs because they didn't trust the vaccine," he said. He is considering looking for a job in retail, even though it won't pay as much as the \$17.20 an hour base rate he made at Tyson, he said. The complex in which the Sedalia plant operates is now 96 percent vaccinated.

The company said that "a very limited number" of employees have quit over the mandate. There are still roughly 4,000 unvaccinated U.S. workers employed by Tyson who were either granted religious or medical exemptions, or who were previously on unrelated leave. Some of those with exemptions were transferred to a position that allowed them to socially distance. Others were furloughed.

Six employees have sued Tyson, claiming it violated Tennessee law by placing workers granted such exemptions on unpaid leave. The case is pending.

Mr. King said he has received comments from workers in emails and text messages.

"I wanted to know what people were thinking," he said. Some of the feedback was angry. "I've gotten a death threat posted on a bathroom wall in one of our plants," he said.

To help make clear the mandate was about keeping workers safe, Tyson needed support from its largest unions, the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union and the United Food and Commercial Workers Union. In exchange for their backing, Tyson agreed to offer more benefits for all workers, like paid sick leave.

	<p>“People who run large corporate enterprises think in two areas: What’s best for my employees and what’s best for the company to keep going?” said William Schaffner, an infectious disease expert at Vanderbilt University. “And in this instance, the two mesh beautifully.”</p> <p>As the number of coronavirus cases and hospitalizations climbed over the summer, Ms. Eike, the administrative coordinator at Tyson in Springdale, began to question her decision to not get vaccinated. Around the same time, Mr. King announced the company mandate, giving her no choice. After Ms. Eike got the vaccine, her adult son, who had suffered a traumatic brain injury that made him fearful of the shot, received one. She now thinks that, considering the stakes, her resistance had been “selfish.”</p> <p>“I kind of beat myself up,” she said, “and think, why did it take somebody else to help me see that?”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/03 DOD: China military power report
SOURCE	https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/2831998/china-military-power-report-details-advances-goals-in-2020/
GIST	<p>The Defense Department today released its annual report on military and security developments involving China, commonly referred to as the China Military Power Report.</p> <p>The report provides background on China's national strategy, foreign policy goals, economic plans and military development.</p> <p>"The report provides a baseline assessment of the department's top pacing challenge, and it charts the modernization of the PLA [People's Liberation Army] throughout 2020," a defense official said Tuesday.</p> <p>"This includes the PLA developing the capabilities to conduct joint, long-range precision strikes across domains; increasingly sophisticated space, counterspace and cyber capabilities; as well as the accelerating expansion of the PLA's nuclear forces."</p> <p>A key revelation in the report are China's advancements in its nuclear capability, including that the accelerated pace of their nuclear expansion may enable China to have up to 700 deliverable nuclear warheads by 2027.</p> <p>"The accelerating pace of the PLA's nuclear expansion may enable the PRC [People's Republic of China] to have up to about 700 deliverable nuclear warheads by 2027," the official said. "And the report states that the PRC likely intends to have at least 1,000 nuclear warheads by 2030 — exceeding the pace and the size that we projected in the 2020 China Military Power report."</p> <p>The report also reveals that China may have already established a nuclear triad, which includes the ability to launch such missiles from the air, ground and sea.</p> <p>"The PRC has possibly already established a nascent 'nuclear triad' with the development of a nuclear-capable, air-launched ballistic missile and improvement of its ground- and sea-based nuclear capabilities," the report reads.</p> <p>New to the report this year is a section on the Chinese military's chemical and biological research efforts. It says China has engaged in biological activities with potential dual-use applications and that this raises concerns regarding its compliance with the Biological and Toxins Weapons Convention and the Chemical Weapons Convention.</p> <p>The report concludes that China continues to be clear in its ambitions to be competitive with world-class military powers, the DOD official said.</p> <p>"The PLA's evolving capabilities and concepts continue to strengthen its ability to fight and win wars, to use their own phrase, against what the PRC refers to as a 'strong enemy' — again, another phrase that</p>

	<p>appears in their publications. And a ‘strong enemy,’ of course, is very likely a euphemism for the United States," he said.</p> <p>According to the report, a big part of China's effort to match the strength of a "strong enemy" involves major modernization and reform efforts within China's army. Those efforts include an ongoing effort to achieve "mechanization," which the report describes as the Chinese army's efforts to modernize its weapons and equipment to be networked into a "systems of systems" and to also utilize more advanced technologies suitable for "informatized" and "intelligentized" warfare.</p> <p>Also of significance are China's efforts to project military power outside it's own borders.</p> <p>"The PRC is seeking to establish a more robust overseas logistics and basing infrastructure to allow the PLA to project and sustain military power at greater distances," the DOD official said. "We're talking about not just within the immediate environments, environments in the Indo-Pacific, but throughout the Indo-Pacific region and indeed, around the world."</p> <p>The official said China's army has sought to modernize its capabilities and improve its proficiency across all warfare domains, so that, as a joint force, it can conduct the range of land, air, and maritime operations that are envisioned in army publications, as well as in space, counterspace, electronic warfare and cyber operations.</p>
Return to Top	<p>Related Publication: DOD 2021 Report on Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China</p>

HEADLINE	11/04 Covid lockdowns ripple across China
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-19-lockdowns-ripple-across-china-i-wonder-how-long-i-can-hang-on-11636025787
GIST	<p>For more than a year, residents living in a remote border town have been China's foot soldiers in the battle against the coronavirus, enduring lockdown after lockdown to shield the rest of the country from contagion.</p> <p>Mothers in Ruili, a jewelry-trading center on China's border with Myanmar, post despairingly about their toddlers being numb to regular swab tests—one said her 2-year-old has gotten 100 in his lifetime. Others post about spending months on end in isolation, despite test after test coming back negative. Some restaurants have been closed for more than half a year.</p> <p>As the Delta variant puts China through one of its biggest Covid-19 outbreaks since it first closed off Wuhan in early 2020, new lockdowns and other strict controls are rippling across the country. Infections have been spreading to more provinces, though nationwide reported case numbers remain below 100 a day so far.</p> <p>With public-health experts signaling that restrictions may continue through most of 2022, people in various corners of the country are beginning to express fatigue with China's "zero-Covid" strategy.</p> <p>On Sunday, tens of thousands were locked inside Shanghai Disneyland. Crowds lined up for swab tests as fireworks erupted in the background before being allowed to leave, after one visitor tested positive.</p> <p>Efforts to protect the nation's capital from the virus have reached new heights ahead of a gathering of more than 300 top Communist Party officials in Beijing next week. Hundreds of people on a high-speed train from Shanghai to Beijing were evacuated last Thursday and sent into quarantine after a train attendant was identified as a close contact of a confirmed case.</p> <p>Two Beijing schools closed Monday after a teacher at one and a student at another tested positive. A video circulating online showed the principal of one school telling parents to bring pillows and blankets</p>

as their children had to await test results in the school overnight. One parent could accompany each child in the mandatory two-week quarantine to follow, the principal said.

In a domino effect, more than a dozen other schools also closed after finding that staff members had gotten booster shots at the same vaccination site as the teacher who tested positive.

Some residents in Beijing have reported being sent to centralized quarantine or being locked in their homes—with sensors outside their doors—after a contact-tracing app identified them as having been to the same location as confirmed cases, even for masked visits that lasted just minutes.

On Monday, the Commerce Ministry urged households and vendors to stock up on necessities ahead of winter, which many interpreted as an effort to prepare the public for more lockdowns. The ministry later urged people not to overthink the announcement.

Since stunning the world with its decision to close off Wuhan in January nearly two years ago, China is continuing to [use lockdowns](#)—along with mass testing and mandatory quarantine—to block the virus anywhere it might pop up, even as other countries—such as Australia and Singapore—that had [held on to strict controls open up](#).

In terms of numbers, China has done remarkably better in the pandemic than most countries, with some 110,000 confirmed cases and fewer than 5,000 deaths, according to data from Johns Hopkins University, compared with more than 46 million cases in the U.S. and nearly 750,000 deaths.

Chinese leader Xi Jinping hasn't [left China since January 2020](#), sticking to virtual appearances at global summits like the Group of 20 meeting in Rome. Mr. Xi addressed the ongoing climate summit in Scotland with a written statement.

China has adopted stricter control measures than practically any other country, said Xuefei Ren, a sociologist at Michigan State University. She said a system like China's, built around control with both local and nationwide surveillance mechanisms, can be very effective in a crisis, as evidenced by the relatively low level of public grumbling and continued compliance with controls.

However, she said, the human impact of a tightly controlled border shouldn't be discounted.

"With a closed door to the country, people-to-people exchanges have been disrupted. The loss is immeasurable," said Dr. Ren, who hasn't seen her father in China in two years.

Officials haven't given any indication that restrictions will loosen soon, with several key dates looming, including the Winter Olympics in Beijing in February and the 20th Party Congress next fall, when Mr. Xi is expected to secure a third term as China's leader.

Zhong Nanshan, China's top respiratory-disease expert, has defended the country's zero-Covid strategy, saying it is still less costly than reintroducing restrictions each time outbreaks occur.

"Some countries decided to fully open up despite still having a few infections," only to start tightening again when infections picked up, Dr. Zhong said in an interview with CGTN, the international arm of China's state broadcaster, this week. "This flip-flopping approach is actually more costly. The psychological impact on citizens and society is also greater."

Dr. Zhong said while he expects China to reach herd immunity in the first half of 2022, Chinese travel overseas likely won't return to normal before the end of next year.

"China is doing very well maintaining 'Covid zero' for now," said Ben Cowling, head of the epidemiology and biostatistics division at the University of Hong Kong's School of Public Health. "But controlling Delta outbreaks come with costs as well as benefits."

Joerg Wuttke, the president of the European Chamber of Commerce in China, said China's restrictions are making it more difficult for foreign companies to plan for the future.

"The longer the isolation lasts, the more it will impact China—especially on the high tech side," said Mr. Wuttke, who is based in Beijing. He said business travelers and specialists are increasingly reluctant to come to China given the difficulties of traveling back and forth, including what is effectively three weeks in quarantine.

In Ruili, officials have said four lockdowns since September last year and other strict controls are a way to prevent the virus from seeping in from Myanmar.

Ruili has reported fewer than 300 locally transmitted cases so far this year but there have been more than 700 cases among returnees from abroad since July, mostly from Myanmar, data from Yunnan's provincial health commission showed.

Earlier this year, the Communist Party fired the city's former party chief for "severe negligence" of his duty in Covid-19 control.

In a post last week on the Twitter -like platform Weibo, a college student said her parents have been jobless after Ruili shut down a jewelry-trading market along the border. "With no income, no subsidies of any form, my parents still need to pay for my younger brother's schooling. Countless families in R are like this," reads the post, which received more than 120,000 likes. The R reference appeared to be an attempt to avoid censorship of posts related to the Ruili restrictions.

One Ruili resident complained online of being unable to leave after 21 days in a makeshift quarantine center despite all Covid-19 tests coming back negative. Another said he has spent about half the year in quarantine, while spending the other half in fear and despair. He said he has received nearly 100 Covid-19 tests over the past year.

"I wonder how long I can hang on," he said.

At a news conference last week, Vice Mayor Yang Mou acknowledged locals were experiencing severe hardships, but said the measures were necessary.

"As long as the number of cases isn't reduced to zero, there are still spillover risks," he said.

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HEADLINE	11/04 Secrets behind big oil climate pledges
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/04/dark-secrets-big-oil-climate-pledges-greenwashing
GIST	<p>JPMorgan Chase won glowing headlines last year when the global investment bank unveiled a commitment to counter the climate crisis.</p> <p>The press amplified JPMorgan's message – sometimes in JPMorgan's own words. Fortune published a commentary article trumpeting the bank's plans to "tackle climate change". Six paragraphs into the piece, the writers noted they worked for the investment firm. (They were actually its top executives.)</p> <p>The bank waited months to detail its plans. In May, it finally outlined its goals: JPMorgan would not pressure oil companies to lower their emissions. Instead, the firm would encourage them to become more efficient. They would focus on their "carbon intensity".</p> <p>That metric has become a favorite of banks, oil companies and other big businesses. They've balked at requirements to cut overall climate pollution. But "carbon intensity" pledges have given companies a framework to keep investing in dirty fuels, while also expanding into pollution-capturing technology and cleaner energy.</p>

“They love the metric,” said Jeanne Martin, senior manager of banking standards at ShareAction, a non-profit focused on responsible investment.

“They have committed to reducing intensity and financing to the oil and gas sector. But that doesn’t ultimately mean they will reduce oil and gas activities. It may actually increase at a faster rate.”

Such “greenwashing”, experts say, allows companies to downplay the scale of the climate crisis – and continue contributing to the problem.

“It’s the next five or 10 years that will determine our collective futures,” said Andrew Logan, oil and gas director at Ceres, the non-profit that advocates for corporate sustainability.

“It’s probably safe to say that there is no company – certainly in the financial sector, or heavy-emitting sectors – that has a fully defensible plan when it comes to meeting the scale and scope of the urgency of the climate challenge.”

World leaders are starting to find the gap between corporate rhetoric and action too glaring to ignore. Historically, oil and gas companies have been top sponsors at international climate meetings, hosting events and [prominently displaying advertisements](#) with their climate goals.

That is beginning to shift. The UK, host of this week’s landmark climate summit in Glasgow, will limit participation by companies unless they have a “credible short-term action plan” to ratchet down emissions. But in the run-up to this year’s negotiations, oil companies are blitzing social media with advertisements about their climate pledges.

In a Facebook [ad campaign](#) launched this month, ExxonMobil promises to cut pollution from drilling. It plans to do that by reducing emissions of methane, a greenhouse gas much more potent than carbon over the short term. That will lower the “methane intensity” of its operations – but it ignores the emissions from customers burning the fuel itself.

“The fossil fuel companies feel the heat and feel the pressure to do something about this, if they want to remain the main provider of energy,” said Yamide Dagnet, the director of climate negotiations at World Resources Institute.

Royal Dutch Shell [announced](#) last week it will cut its absolute carbon emissions in half by 2030. But the commitment pertains only to the company’s internal climate footprint, not the much larger share of emissions that occur when its fuels are burned for energy. The timing of the announcement is also notable, as it comes on the heels of a Dutch court [ruling](#) earlier this year that Shell must slash its emissions 45% by 2030.

Most other fossil fuel companies – and the banks that finance them – continue to find alternatives to promising outright emissions reductions.

A net zero goal signals a company aims to offset its emissions by adding cleaner energy projects to their portfolios, or attempting to capture carbon dioxide and stop it from entering the air. But these goals can be so narrow as to be meaningless.

Beau O’Sullivan, senior communications campaigner at the global social activist group Sunrise Project*, said fossil fuel companies were “inoculating themselves from bank and shareholder pressure by making these net zero commitments”.

BP has the most aggressive decarbonization plans in the sector, according to an [analysis](#) by the global energy research and consultancy firm Wood Mackenzie.

The company aims to be net zero for its operations and upstream production by 2050 and to halve its carbon intensity by then. It has slashed its budget for oil exploration, and it's the only oil giant that has promised to cut production over the next decade.

But the devil is in the details – or the [lack thereof](#).

BP declined to comment on why it has excluded a large portion of its emissions in its net zero commitment, choosing not to calculate emissions from its more than 20% [stake](#) in the Russian company Rosneft. Rosneft explores for oil and gas in some of the most remote regions, including in ecologically vulnerable Siberia and the Arctic.

The company's lobbying also conflicts with its climate message. In 2020, BP left three associations because of their climate positions. But it is still a member of the American Petroleum Institute, which has [lobbied](#) against electric vehicle tax breaks, methane regulations and drilling restrictions in the Arctic.

BP in a March 2021 [report](#) said it is working with API and other associations to move “on important issues such as support for the Paris Agreement, regulation of methane, carbon pricing and the role of climate science”.

These greenwashing campaigns benefit more than just the oil companies.

Banks are increasingly under pressure to drop their financing of fossil fuels. To defend their continued investments, they're pointing at oil companies' climate pledges.

“We're now at a point where the very largest investors in the world, the investors who are the biggest shareholders in high-emitting companies, see climate change as a real threat to the financial health of whole sectors,” said Miguel Jaller, the vice-chair of the department of civil and environmental engineering at the University of California, Davis. Jaller was the lead author on a [white paper that found intensity targets can play a role](#) in emissions reductions, but aren't a one-size-fits-all tool.

“Ultimately, climate change is an absolute problem that requires absolute reductions in emissions,” Jaller said.

Banks have begun to commit to shrink the carbon footprint of their own operations, including from powering their office buildings. But their biggest contributions to global heating are in the oil and gas companies they finance. Few have weaved in climate commitments with their financing strategies, although they are beginning to now.

The world's 60 largest banks financed nearly \$4tn in fossil fuel projects between 2016 and 2020, according to a March [report](#) from a coalition of climate organizations including the Rainforest Action Network (RAN), Sierra Club, BankTrack and more. That total includes lending, equity issuance and debt underwriting.

JPMorgan is the largest financier of oil and gas projects in the world, according to the report. The US-based bank poured \$51bn into the sector just in 2020.

JPMorgan [announced in May](#) of this year that it would revise its lending portfolio to be more sustainable. “We are the first large US bank to lay out concrete targets that help meet the goals of Paris – climate change is a critical issue and we want to be part of the solution, advancing sustainable and inclusive growth,” a spokesperson for JP Morgan said in a statement.

But JP Morgan's benchmark is built around carbon intensity. The bank could finance more drilling without breaking its pledge.

The bank wants oil and gas companies to cut their operations emissions intensity 35%. It's asking for much less from their oil and gas products – like natural gas for electricity and oil that is turned into gasoline for vehicles. For those, the bank wants a 15% reduction in intensity by 2030.

JPMorgan has said it will “work with clients to address end-use emissions, including by shifting to lower-carbon fuels and exploring other business diversification strategies.”

The main lower-carbon fuel is natural gas. If a fossil fuel company increases natural gas production enough, it could offset its emissions progress. It could keep its intensity metric lower while still increasing its overall emissions.

“They really took a page out of the oil industry book, when it comes to talking about their goals,” said Jackie Fielder, digital and communications coordinator at Stop the Money Pipeline, a coalition committed to ending the financing of fossil fuel companies.

“They talked in terms of carbon intensity. So that's completely compatible with increased emissions.”

On the ground, JP Morgan's financing has powered some of the most controversial fossil fuel projects. It funded TC Energy's Coastal GasLink, a fracked-gas pipeline that [in 2020 leaked in Wet'suwet'en Territory](#). It also financed Cheniere's [Corpus Christi natural gas export facility](#), as well as Enbridge, which is building the Line 3 pipeline.

A JP Morgan spokesperson said the bank focuses on helping clients “transition to the low-carbon world”, and supports climate policies like a carbon tax. But, the spokesperson added, the bank believes the world still needs oil and gas.

“The solution is not as simple as walking away from fossil fuels,” the bank's spokesperson said.

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HEADLINE	11/04 Longest uptick new vaccinations in months
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/news/covid-19-vaccinations-increase/
GIST	<p>New COVID-19 vaccinations have accelerated for eight straight days nationwide, according to federal data, marking the longest uptick seen in the U.S. since early August.</p> <p>The nationwide seven-day moving average of first doses climbed to 264,549 a day on October 29, as of the latest figures from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. All but two states — Utah and West Virginia — are now averaging a faster pace of people starting vaccination than the week prior.</p> <p>The record uptick comes as federal health officials say they are continuing to ramp up their push for initial vaccinations among adults, along with campaigns to roll out millions of doses for younger children and booster shots for those vaccinated earlier.</p> <p>The White House recently touted reaching two new vaccination milestones and is nearing another one: nearly 7 in 10 adults are fully vaccinated.</p> <p>"A year ago, we had no vaccines. Just this week, we hit an important milestone: 80% of adults have at least one shot. That's four out of every five adults. And for our seniors, over 95% have gotten at least one shot," President Biden said Wednesday.</p> <p>The recent increase came after the administration announced several sweeping mandates to boost vaccination rates.</p> <p>Most federal workers and contractors had needed to start vaccination over the past few weeks in order to meet their vaccination requirements in time, before the administration pushed back their deadline. Those</p>

workers will now be required to complete their shots by January 4. That date is also when [mandates detailed Thursday for large employers](#) and most health care providers go into effect.

Deadlines for first doses at a slew of other employers have also arrived in recent days, from [the City of New York](#) to [UnitedHealth Group](#).

However, at least some of the recent surge in first doses could also be from incorrectly reported booster shots.

In New Hampshire, which on Wednesday became the ninth state in the CDC's tally to reach 90% of their adult residents with at least one dose, the state's top health official recently told [a local radio station](#) that she suspected boosters might be inflating the figures.

"Because of the inability to link across multiple sources of de-identified data, some booster doses may be counted as primary doses," CDC spokesperson Scott Pauley told CBS News.

Since shots are reported to the CDC anonymously from pharmacies, Pauley said only New Hampshire's immunization information system, or IIS, is able to go back and correct miscategorized doses.

"As New Hampshire connects more pharmacies to their jurisdiction's IIS, this issue will decrease," said Pauley.

Nationwide, the average daily pace of boosters has climbed to 775,513, nearly triple the daily number of first shots. More than a quarter of vaccinated seniors now have an additional dose.

Health experts have warned both the booster and first dose campaigns will need to accelerate ahead of colder winter months favorable to respiratory diseases like COVID-19, pointing to signs a potential new wave of the virus could be looming.

After plummeting for nearly two months, the [CDC reported](#) an uptick in COVID-19 cases last week. The agency's forecasters [on Wednesday](#) warned that the pace of new hospitalizations could "remain stable or have an uncertain trend" over the coming days, after weeks of estimating that they would "likely decrease" nationwide.

"We've made incredible progress over these past nine months, but we have to keep going. The pandemic is not yet behind us, but we're getting there," President Biden said.

"So please, please do your part. If you know someone who is not vaccinated, encourage them to get vaccinated."

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HEADLINE	11/04 Thousands of intel officers refuse vaccine
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/thousands-intel-officers-refusing-vaccine-risk-dismissal-80985138
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON -- Thousands of intelligence officers could soon face dismissal for failing to comply with the U.S. government's vaccine mandate, leading some Republican lawmakers to raise concerns about removing employees from agencies critical to national security.</p> <p>Several intelligence agencies had at least 20% of their workforce unvaccinated as of late October, said U.S. Rep. Chris Stewart, a Utah Republican who is a member of the House Intelligence Committee. Some agencies in the 18-member intelligence community had as much as 40% of their workforce unvaccinated, Stewart said, citing information the administration has provided to the committee but not released publicly. He declined to identify the agencies because full information on vaccination rates was classified.</p> <p>While many people will likely still get vaccinated before the administration's Nov. 22 deadline for civilian workers, resistance to the mandate could leave major agencies responsible for national security without</p>

some personnel. Intelligence officers are particularly hard to replace due to the highly specialized work they do and the difficulties of completing security clearance checks.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence declined several requests to provide figures for the intelligence community. The office also would not say what contingency plans are in place in case officers are taken off work due to not complying with the mandate.

Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines declined at a hearing last week to disclose what percentage of the workforce had been vaccinated, but said “we are not anticipating that it is going to be an issue for mission.” There are an estimated 100,000 employees in the intelligence community.

The vaccination rates provided by Stewart are mostly higher than those of the general U.S. population. About 70% of American adults are fully vaccinated and 80% have received at least one dose of a vaccine.

Stewart called on the administration to approve more exemptions for people on medical, religious and other grounds, and delay any terminations of intelligence officers.

“My question is what’s the impact on national security if we do that?” Stewart said. “You’re potentially firing thousands of people on the same day. And it’s not like you put an ad on Craigslist and have people apply by Thursday.”

President Joe Biden has issued several mandates to boost the vaccination rate in the U.S. affecting federal employees, contractors and health care workers. The White House has credited those mandates with driving up vaccination rates and reducing deaths from a pandemic that has killed more than 750,000 people in the U.S. and 5 million people worldwide.

Federal regulators and independent health experts have certified that the available vaccines are safe. A recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study found that from April to July, unvaccinated people were 10 times more likely than vaccinated people to be hospitalized and 11 times more likely to die of COVID-19.

Mandates to get vaccinated have faced significant resistance, particularly given an already-tight market for businesses looking to hire workers. Some first responders have resisted vaccine mandates as have employee unions, arguing that mandates impinge on personal freedom.

CIA Director William Burns disclosed publicly last week that 97% of the agency's officers have been vaccinated. The National Reconnaissance Office, which operates U.S. spy satellites, has more than 90% of its workforce vaccinated.

House Intelligence Committee Democrats say they’re confident that the vaccination mandate will not cause a problem for the intelligence community. Rep. Jason Crow, a Colorado Democrat, said the agencies were doing “quite well” and that getting vaccinated was a sign of an employee’s readiness.

“If somebody is not willing to do what’s necessary to protect their own health and the health of their unit, that actually calls into question their ability to effectively do the job,” Crow said in an interview.

The Biden administration classified information it gave the intelligence committee on each of the nation’s 18 intelligence agencies, said Stewart, who noted generally that agencies more closely affiliated with the military tended to report lower vaccination rates.

Several major agencies with large military components all declined to provide their vaccination rate when asked by The Associated Press, including the National Security Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency and the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. The NGA, which produces intelligence from satellites and drones, said in a statement that it was “working to ensure that all members of the workforce understand the process and documentation required” prior to the deadline.

Stewart, a former Air Force pilot, has been vaccinated, but said he opposes mandates as being intrusive and counterproductive.

“If you say, ‘You have to do this and we won’t consider any exceptions to that,’ that’s where you get people to dig in their heels,” he said.

Rep. Darin LaHood, an Illinois Republican, echoed Stewart's concerns in a hearing last week and told agency leaders that the question of unvaccinated employees “affects all of you and us globally.”

Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va., the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said in a statement that he supported requiring vaccinations for federal employees. “We need to be using every tool at our disposal to save lives and protect mission readiness,” Warner said.

Federal employees who aren’t vaccinated or haven't received an exemption by Nov. 22 could face a suspension of 14 days or fewer, followed by possible dismissal. The General Services Administration has advised agencies that “unique operational needs of agencies and the circumstances affecting a particular employee may warrant departure from these guidelines if necessary.”

Steve Morrison, director of the Global Health Policy Center at the Washington-based Center for Strategic & International Studies, said the vaccine mandate was still relatively new and he expected the numbers to change before the administration’s cutoff.

Morrison said that as intelligence agencies broadly work with unvaccinated employees, “they’re going to have to show some flexibility around the margins without compromising away the basic strategy and goals.”

“Getting control over this pandemic in the United States requires getting to a much higher level of vaccine coverage,” Morrison said. “It’s a matter of national security.”

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HEADLINE	11/04 Optimism: warming projections down a bit
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Technology/wireStory/optimism-climate-talks-warming-projections-bit-80978955
GIST	<p>GLASGOW, Scotland -- With pledges for a United Nations climate conference, the world may be ever so slightly receding from gloomy scenarios of future global warming, according to two new preliminary scientific analyses Thursday.</p> <p>The two reports — one by the International Energy Agency and the other by Australian scientists — focused on optimistic scenarios. If all goes right, they said, recent actions will trim two-or three-tenths of a degree Celsius (0.3 to 0.5 degrees Fahrenheit) from projections made in mid-October.</p> <p>Instead of 2.1 degrees Celsius (3.8 Fahrenheit) of warming since pre-industrial times, the analyses project warming at 1.8 (3.2 degrees Fahrenheit) or 1.9 degrees (3.4 degrees Fahrenheit).</p> <p>Still, both projections leave the world far from the 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) of warming since pre-industrial time that is the goal of the 2015 Paris climate deal. The planet has already warmed 1.1 degrees Celsius (2 degrees Fahrenheit).</p> <p>The U.N. planned an announcement for Friday afternoon at climate negotiations about how much “actions announced so far at Glasgow helped to bend the curve.”</p> <p>“We are now in a slightly more positive outlook for the future,” said University of Melbourne climate scientist Malte Meinshausen, whose flash analysis, not peer-reviewed, sees warming at 1.9 degrees, mostly because of late long-term pledges by India and China.</p>

“It’s still a long way away from 1.5 degrees. We know that some of the ecosystems are going to suffer and we’re going to notice, for example, the coral reefs and the Great Barrier Reef here in Australia (die) with these temperature levels,” Meinshausen said in an interview. “It is just scraping below two degrees. So therefore there’s a lot more to be done.”

The energy agency analysis factored in India’s announcement of short-term carbon dioxide emission curbs and a net-zero pledge by 2070 on Monday, as well as pledges by more than 100 countries Tuesday to reduce the powerful greenhouse gas methane. The intergovernmental agency said it was the first time projections fell below 2 degrees Celsius — a long-standing threshold for tipping points that some scientists say could bring even more dangerous and potentially uncontrolled warming.

“If all these pledges were to be implemented, the temperature increase could be limited to 1.8 degrees Celsius. I think this is a very, well-celebrated achievement,” agency chief Fatih Birol told leaders at climate negotiations in Glasgow called COP26. “Congratulations.”

Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research Director Johan Rockstrom, who wasn’t part of either research, said small differences at this temperature level are important: “Every tenth of a degree matters because it gets worse and worse.”

Both teams emphasize that their projections are based on the most optimistic scenarios possible, using nations’ mid-century — or in India’s case 2070 — pledges of net zero emissions that are far from codified in plans or actions.

Scenarios that look at just short-term pledges, not net-zero ones, put warming at 2.7 degrees Celsius (4.9 degrees Fahrenheit). So some outsider experts say the new projections should be viewed with caution.

“This optimistic view must be complemented with the short-term view, which is pointing in the opposite direction,” said New Climate Institute scientist Niklas Hohne, who tracks emission pledges for Climate Action Tracker, which will have its own estimates in a few days.

Mohamed Adow, director of Nairobi-based think tank Power Shift Africa and a veteran climate talks observer, said it’s too early to put too much faith in Glasgow pledges: “These announcements may generate headlines but assessing their true worth is hugely difficult, especially at speed during a COP meeting.”

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HEADLINE	11/04 Putin: Crimea forever part of Russia
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/unity-day-putin-proclaims-crimea-forever-part-russia-80972930
GIST	<p>MOSCOW -- Russian President Vladimir Putin marked the national Unity Day holiday with a trip to Crimea, declaring the region will always be a part of Russia.</p> <p>Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, a move that Western countries regard as illegitimate, in the wake of the overthrow of Ukraine’s Kremlin-friendly president.</p> <p>Putin exalted the annexation while visiting the city that is the home port for Russia’s Black Sea fleet on Thursday.</p> <p>“Our country has regained its historical unity. This living and unbreakable bond can be especially keenly felt, of course, here, in Sevastopol, in Crimea,” he said. “They are with Russia forever now, as that is the sovereign, free and unbending will of the people, of all our people.”</p> <p>Unity Day marks the expulsion in 1612 of Polish-Lithuanian forces that occupied Moscow; the holiday was started in 2005, replacing the Soviet-era commemoration on that date of the Bolshevik Revolution.</p>

	<p>The day also became an occasion for anti-immigrant marches by nationalists, but Moscow authorities banned the event from taking place in the Russian capital this year.</p> <p>About 20 people were detained as they tried to gather in a Moscow subway station for a nationalist demonstration, according to OVD-Info, a group that monitors political demonstrations and arrests.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/05 Tigray, opposition groups form alliance
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/ethiopian-armed-opposition-groups-form-alliance-80981133
GIST	<p>NAIROBI, Kenya -- Ethiopia's Tigray forces are joining with other armed and opposition groups in an alliance against Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed to seek a political transition after a year of devastating war, organizers say.</p> <p>The signing in Washington on Friday includes the Tigray forces that have been fighting Ethiopian and allied forces, as well as the Oromo Liberation Army now fighting alongside the Tigray forces and seven other groups from around the country.</p> <p>The alliance is forming as U.S. special envoy Jeffrey Feltman is in Ethiopia's capital meeting with senior government officials amid calls for an immediate cease-fire and talks to end the war that has killed thousands of people since November 2020. The U.S. said he met with the deputy prime minister and defense and finance ministers on Thursday.</p> <p>The new United Front of Ethiopian Federalist Forces seeks to "establish a transitional arrangement in Ethiopia" so the prime minister can go as soon as possible, organizer Yohanees Abraha, who is with the Tigray group, told The Associated Press late Thursday. "The next step will be, of course, to start meeting and communicating with countries, diplomats and international actors in Ethiopia and abroad."</p> <p>He said the new alliance is both political and military. It has had no communication with Ethiopia's government, he added.</p> <p>A spokesman for the Oromo Liberation Army, Odaa Tarbii, confirmed the new alliance. When asked whether it meant to force Abiy out, he replied that it depended on Ethiopia's government and events over the coming weeks. "Of course we prefer if there's a peaceful and orderly transition with Abiy being removed," he said.</p> <p>"The goal is to be as inclusive as possible. We know this transition requires all stakeholders," he added. But as for members of the prime minister's Prosperity Party, "there would have to be a process. Many members would have to go through investigation, possibly be prosecuted" for crimes related to the war.</p> <p>The spokeswoman for the prime minister, Billene Seyoum, addressed the new alliance Thursday evening when she tweeted that "any outliers that rejected the democratic processes Ethiopia embarked upon cannot be for democratization," pointing out Abiy's opening-up of political space after taking office in 2018. His reforms included welcoming some opposition groups home from exile.</p> <p>The spokeswoman said she had no further comment Friday, and had no information on whether the prime minister would be meeting with the U.S. special envoy.</p> <p>The OLA spokesman in reply to her tweet noted that some of the people who returned to Ethiopia were later put in prison or under house arrest. "A lot of goodwill was lost over the last three years," he said.</p> <p>Other groups signing on Friday include the Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front, Agaw Democratic Movement, Benishangul People's Liberation Movement, Gambella Peoples Liberation Army, Global Kimant People Right and Justice Movement/ Kimant Democratic Party, Sidama National Liberation Front and Somali State Resistance, according to organizers.</p>
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Cyber Awareness

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HEADLINE	11/04 DOD revised cyber standards contractors
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/pentagon-issues-revised-cyber-standards-for-contractors/
GIST	<p>The Defense Department on Thursday released a revamped framework and digital security standards for contractors that is intended to “minimize barriers” for compliance.</p> <p>The updated Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification, dubbed “CMMC 2.0,” is the result of a months-long internal review by the Pentagon after industry groups and contractors expressed concerns about the scope of the effort, which began to take shape in 2019, and that it could become another source of red tape in the already bureaucracy-heavy Pentagon.</p> <p>“CMMC 2.0 will dramatically strengthen the cybersecurity of the defense industrial base,” Jesse Salazar, deputy assistant secretary of defense for industrial policy, said in a statement. “By establishing a more collaborative relationship with industry, these updates will support businesses in adopting the practices they need to thwart cyber threats while minimizing barriers to compliance with DoD requirements.”</p> <p>The original framework’s five-tier system is pared down to three under the new model. It also no longer requires every defense contractor to obtain a third-party certification if they don’t handle “controlled unclassified data” —a generalized classification for information which in this instance would predominantly mean DoD systems, including weapons.</p> <p>Companies that do deal in such information must meet the top tier of the new model and get a third-party certification proving they possess certain cybersecurity standards before they could receive a contract award.</p> <p>However, the new framework also contains a broader waiver process for contractors.</p> <p>Last week John Sherman, President Joe Biden’s nominee for Pentagon chief information officer, said he wanted to update CMMC to make it easier for companies to adhere to the department’s cyber standards.</p> <p>“If confirmed, there’s a number of things I’d want to do to” the program to make it “not onerous” for small and medium-sized businesses, he told the Senate Armed Services Committee.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 Anti-ransomware efforts working?
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/cybercrime/does-blackmatters-demise-mean-anti-ransomware-efforts-are-working
GIST	<p>On Tuesday, the ransomware group BlackMatter told affiliates it would shut down operations due to law enforcement pressure. A Russia-based group, BlackMatter's reasons would imply some of the international community's efforts to get Russia to enforce cybercrime laws were bearing fruit. Not so fast, say experts.</p> <p>"There's no doubt that the recent surge in focused operations against ransomware infrastructure and groups by the U.S. and international law enforcement community has had an effect, [but] it is unclear if the impact of government-led actions will force BlackMatter out of existence or just cause them to go quiet and re-emerge months from now with a new brand," said Mike DeBolt, chief intelligence officer of Intel 471.</p> <p>International cooperation, particularly from nations known to harbor cybercriminals, has long been a sticking point in the fight against ransomware. Ransomware groups based in Russia have traditionally enjoyed a tacit understanding with the government that if they do not victimize Russians, they will not be pursued by law enforcement. A study in September from Chainalysis noted that 90% of ransoms were paid to ransomware specifically designed to avoid Russian-speaking victims.</p>

After the high profile ransomware attacks in early 2021, as ransomware policy debates in the United States began to heat up, attention began to shift to Russia. The Biden administration began to push Moscow to [punish crime at home](#) — with Russia publicly [agreeing to help](#) after a summit between the United States and Russian presidents.

BlackMatter's swan song was first reported by [VX Underground](#), who translated a Russian language communication from the group to its affiliates: "Due to certain unsolvable circumstances associated with pressure from the authorities (part of the team is no longer available). After 48 hours, the entire infrastructure will be turned off."

But DeBolt and others caution against taking BlackMatter at its word over why it is going out of business.

"There's a kind of pattern of practice of these groups where they supposedly close up shop but then pop up again three weeks later," said Megan Stifel, chief strategy officer at the Institute for Security and Technology and a co-chair of the multistakeholder research group the Ransomware Task Force.

BlackMatter, for example, has done this once before. Until this summer, the group is widely believed to have been operating as DarkSide, the ransomware group most famous for disrupting the Colonial Pipeline. DarkSide, too, had abruptly exited the market amid international attention after Colonial Pipeline briefly shutdown. Alongside REvil's attacks on JBS and Kaseya, mainstream headlines over attacks had made for an inhospitable environment for any ransomware group to operate — particularly one in the spotlight. Cybercrime forums kicked ransomware operators off.

On Wednesday, over 24 hours after the BlackMatter announcement, the State Department announced a [\\$10 million bounty](#) on information leading to the identification or capture of DarkSide leadership. While there is no reason to assume the group knew in advance they would receive this kind of direct pressure, the amount of global cooperation to crack down on ransomware has been rising steadily. REvil, for example, was hacked by law enforcement, the head of U.S. CyberCom announced a surge against ransomware groups, and Europol has been more aggressive.

As for Russian cooperation, Stifel said to wait for a consistent pattern before believing there will be a continued effort.

"The proof with Russia is never the near-term signs of success. It's longer-term indicia of impact," she said.

Experts are more cautious than optimistic about what the Black Matter announcement could mean. But there is some hope to be cautiously optimistic.

"We don't know for sure, and time will tell, but for now this is at least a potentially positive development," said David Kris, former assistant attorney general for the National Security Division of the Department of Justice and founder of the Culper Partners consulting group.

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HEADLINE	11/04 US \$10M bounty for DarkSide leadership
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/threat-intelligence/us-offers-10m-reward-for-id-location-of-darkside-leadership
GIST	<p>The US Department of State has announced a reward of up to \$10 million for information leading to the identification or location of anyone holding a key leadership position in the DarkSide ransomware group.</p> <p>It's not only after the leaders: The State Department is also offering a reward of up to \$5 million for information leading to the arrest and/or conviction in any country, of any person "conspiring to participate in or attempting to participate in a DarkSide variant ransomware incident," officials wrote in a release.</p>

	<p>US government officials believe DarkSide was behind the ransomware attack on Colonial Pipeline in May 2021 that led the company to temporarily shut down some 5,500 miles of pipeline carrying 45% of fuel used on the East Coast.</p> <p>This reward is offered under the State Department's Transnational Organized Crime Rewards Program (TOCRP), which aims to disrupt transnational organized crime. TOCRP has paid more than \$135 million in rewards to date, and officials say more than 75 transnational criminals and major narcotics traffickers have been brought to justice under the TOCRP and Narcotics Rewards Program since 1986.</p>
Return to Top	Read the full announcement for more details.

HEADLINE	11/04 Phishing latest clever brand impersonation
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/attacks-breaches/new-lure-impersonates-popular-amazon-brand-and-combines-email-phishing-with-a-voice-scam-
GIST	<p>A new multistage phishing campaign spoofs Amazon's order notification page and includes a phony customer service voice number where the attackers request the victim's credit card details to correct the errant "order."</p> <p>The campaign, highlighted in new research from Avanan on Thursday, underscores how phishing attacks are growing in sophistication by using a combination of email and voice lures and leveraging popular brands such as Amazon to scam potential victims.</p> <p>Gil Friedrich, CEO at Avanan, now owned by CheckPoint, says that starting in October, Avanan observed a new attack in which the attacker spoofed a typical Amazon order notification page.</p> <p>The attack works like this: The victim receives an email showing their supposed Amazon order that totals more than \$300. The victim, realizing they didn't place the order, clicks on a link in the email, which takes them to the actual Amazon website. A customer service number in the phishing email, which has an area code from South Carolina, doesn't answer when they try to call.</p> <p>After a few hours, the attackers call back – from India – and the phony customer service rep tells the victim they need to give their credit card and CVV number in order to cancel the invoice.</p> <p>“This results not only in monetary gain for the hackers, but serves as a form of phone number harvesting for the attackers, allowing them to carry out further attacks over the next several weeks via voicemail or text messaging,” Friedrich explains.</p> <p>In another clever brand impersonation scam, reported by Armorblox today, a credential phishing attack impersonated Proofpoint and tried to steal the Microsoft and Google email credentials of potential victims. The email claimed to contain a secure file sent by Proofpoint as a link, but once the victim clicked, it took them to a splash page that spoofed Proofpoint branding and included dedicated log-in page spoofs for Microsoft and Google.</p> <p>Armorblox researchers say the whole aim of the scam was to play off a trusted security brand like Proofpoint and well-known brands such as Microsoft and Google. While slightly different, it demonstrates how clever attackers have become and how they prey on people's trust in well-known brands.</p> <p>Zero Risk</p> <p>In the Amazon case, the benefit of this type of multistage phishing attack is that the attacker is far more likely to succeed when the potential victim calls, notes Roger Grimes, data-driven defense evangelist at KnowBe4. The email takes almost no effort to set up and send – with zero risk, he adds. The same holds true for all phishing emails and attacks, he says.</p> <p>"But here the difference is that when someone goes out of their way to call the phisher, the phisher knows they have a high likelihood of conversion on that potential victim," Grimes says. "The victim has already</p>

	<p>mentally bought into the scam. The victim, if they ever had any skepticism, is further convinced the scam is real because the pretend brand entity is now working across multiple mediums. The victim probably cannot believe that a scammer would go through the trouble of having real phone numbers and live people who answer them, not knowing that phishing scams often do."</p> <p>Another popular version of this type of scam is an email pretending to be from the victim's local power company. The email claims the victim's payment to the power company was declined and that their power will soon get cut off. The victim is instructed to go to the local store and purchase money vouchers to pay.</p> <p>"You might ask yourself, 'Who could possibly believe that their power company is asking them to pay by money vouchers?'" Grimes says. "In my anecdotal experience, about 10% of victims."</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 Phishing emails deliver MirCop ransomware
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/phishing-emails-deliver-spooky-zombie-themed-mircop-ransomware/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>A new phishing campaign pretending to be supply lists infects users with the MirCop ransomware that encrypts a target system in under fifteen minutes.</p> <p>The actors begin the attack by sending an unsolicited email to the victim, supposedly following up on a previous arrangement about an order.</p> <p>The email body contains a hyperlink to a Google Drive URL, which, if clicked, downloads an MHT file (webpage archive) onto the victim's machine.</p> <p>Google Drive serves to introduce legitimacy to the email and aligns very well with common day-to-day business practices.</p> <p>For threat actors, simple but key choices like this can distinguish between the victim clicking the URL or sending the email to the spam folder.</p> <p>Those who open the file can only see a blurred image of what is supposedly a supplier list, stamped and signed for an extra touch of legitimacy.</p> <p>When the MHT file is opened, it will download a RAR archive containing a .NET malware downloader from "hXXps://a[.]pomf[.]cat/gecptpe.rar".</p> <p>The RAR archive contains an EXE file, which uses VBS scripts to drop and execute the MirCop payload onto the infected system.</p> <p>The ransomware activates immediately and starts taking screenshots, locks files, changes the background to a horrid zombie-themed image, and offers victims instructions on what to do next.</p> <p>According to Cofense, this whole process takes less than 15 minutes from the moment the victim opens the phishing email.</p> <p>After that, the user is only allowed to open specific web browsers to communicate with the actors and arrange the payment of the ransom.</p> <p>The actors are not interested in sneaking into the victim's machine stealthily or staying there for long to conduct cyber-espionage or steal files for extortion.</p> <p>On the contrary, the attack unfolds rapidly, and the source of trouble becomes quickly evident to the victim</p>

An old but still dangerous strain

MicroCop is an old ransomware strain that used to deliver absurd ransom demands onto its victims.

That was until Michael Gillespie cracked its encryption and [released a working decryptor for free](#).

We were unable to test if that old decryptor works with the payloads dropped in the most recent campaign, but it's possible that it can still unlock the files.

Cofense says the same variant has been in circulation since June this year, so MicroCop is still out there, and people need to be cautious with handling unsolicited emails.

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HEADLINE	11/04 Popular 'coa' NPM library hijacked
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/popular-coa-npm-library-hijacked-to-steal-user-passwords/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Popular npm library 'coa' was hijacked today with malicious code injected into it, ephemerally impacting React pipelines around the world.</p> <p>The 'coa' library, short for Command-Option-Argument, receives about 9 million weekly downloads on npm, and is used by almost 5 million open source repositories on GitHub.</p> <p>Hours after this discovery, another commonly used npm component 'rc' was also found to have been hijacked. The 'rc' library nets 14 million downloads a week on average.</p> <p>Malicious code injected into 'coa' releases</p> <p>Today, developers around the world were left surprised to notice new releases for npm library 'coa'—a project that hasn't been touched for years, unexpectedly appear on npm.</p> <p>'coa' is a command-line options parser for Node.js projects. The last stable version 2.0.2 for the project was released in December 2018.</p> <p>But, several suspicious versions 2.0.3, 2.0.4, 2.1.1, 2.1.3, and 3.1.3 began appearing on npm as of a few hours ago, breaking React packages that depend on 'coa'.</p> <p>"I'm not sure why or what happened but 10 minutes ago there was a release (even though the last change on GitHub was in 2018). Whatever this release did, it broke the internet," said Roberto Wesley Overdijk, a React developer.</p> <p>Another GitHub user with handle <i>ElBidouilleur</i> saw one of these 'coa' versions, 2.1.3 breaking their build:</p> <pre>npm ERR! code ELIFECYCLE npm ERR! errno 1 npm ERR! coa@2.1.3 preinstall: start /B node compile.js & node compile.js npm ERR! Exit status 1 npm ERR! npm ERR! Failed at the coa@2.1.3 preinstall script. npm ERR! This is probably not a problem with npm. There is likely additional logging output above. npm ERR! A complete log of this run can be found in: npm ERR! /home/mboutin/.npm/_logs/2021-11-04T14_01_45_544Z-debug.log</pre> <p>Several developers joined the discussion, confirming experiencing issues with their builds ever since the new 'coa' releases hit npm.</p> <p>Shortly after publishing this piece, BleepingComputer also came across claims that another popular npm library, 'rc' was also hijacked, with malicious versions 1.2.9, 1.3.9, and 2.3.9 appearing on npm.</p>

Malware identical to hacked 'ua-parser-js' and fake Noblox packages

This incident follows last month's hack of another popular npm library "[ua-parser-js](#)" that is used by Facebook, Microsoft, Amazon, Reddit, and other big tech firms.

The malware contained in hacked 'coa' versions, as analyzed by BleepingComputer, is virtually identical to the code found in the hijacked *ua-parser-js* versions, potentially establishing a link between the threat actors behind both incidents.

Although the malicious 'coa' versions have been taken down on npm, as a Sonatype security researcher I was able to retrieve archived copies from Sonatype's automated malware detection system.

Versions 2.0.3, 2.1.3, and some others appear to contain nothing other than suspicious *preinstall* scripts...
"preinstall": "start /B node compile.js & node compile.js"

But it is with 2.0.4 that we see malicious code introduced in full swing. It is in *coa:2.0.4*, that the "compile.js" referenced by the preinstall script actually exists and is run...

This JavaScript file further launches a Batch file, "compile.bat" included in the "coa" npm archive.

The Batch script is yet again obfuscated, but in the style of [fake Noblox npm typosquats](#) caught last week that would install ransomware and credential stealers on infected machines. It leverages a concept known as [variable expansion](#) for obfuscation...

And this Batch file downloads and runs an "[sdd.dll](#)" from [pastorcryptograph\[.\]at](#), which is not identical to the "sdd.dll" [dropped by the hijacked ua-parser-js versions](#).

And the "sdd.dll" dropped by malicious 'rc' versions is [yet again different](#) (in terms of checksum) than these two. But all of the DLLs essentially plant the same malware.

Based on our analysis and information seen thus far, the malware is likely the Danabot password-stealing Trojan for Windows.

When loaded via regsvr32.exe, it will eventually launch again using rundll32.exe with various arguments to perform different malicious behavior.

Password-stealing trojan launched by Rundll

When loaded, Danabot will perform the various malicious activity, including:

- Steal passwords from a variety of web browsers, including Chrome, Firefox, Opera, Internet Explorer, and Safari.
- Steal passwords from various applications, including VNC, online casino applications, FTP clients, and mail accounts.
- Steal stored credit cards.
- Take screenshots of the active screens.
- Log keystrokes.

All of this stolen data is then sent back to the threat actors to allow them to breach victims' other accounts.

What should COA and RC users do?

Due to the widespread impact of this supply-chain attack, it is strongly advised that all users of the "coa" and "rc" libraries check their projects for malicious software.

This includes checking for the existence of either **compile.js**, **compile.bat**, **sdd.dll** and deleting the files if they are found.

Because this "sdd.dll" variant has also been identified as a trojan on VirusTotal, and the one dropped by "ua-parser-js" was a credential stealer, infected users should also consider their device fully compromised

	<p>and change their passwords, keys, and refresh tokens, as they were likely compromised and sent to the threat actor.</p> <p>"NPM has removed the compromised versions and, if I understand correctly, blocked new versions from being published temporarily while recovering access to the package," explains Overdijk.</p> <p>"No fix should be needed as the affected versions have been removed. But I'm leaving what I wrote initially just in case something does go wrong again. For now I'd advise you to pin the version as described below until this has been resolved conclusively."</p> <p>Tips shared in the original GitHub discussion include pinning the npm version to stable release "2.0.2": <pre>"resolutions": { "coa": "2.0.2" },</pre></p> <p>For 'rc', a safe version to be on would be 1.2.8.</p> <p>"Following ongoing investigations, we identified in real time multiple versions of the 'rc' package containing identical malware to the 'coa' package. Malicious versions of 'rc' were immediately removed from the registry and we have published an advisory," states npm, who blamed the incident on a compromised npm account and have recommended that npm maintainers use two-factor authentication to prevent such attacks.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 Australia state service site hacked
SOURCE	https://www.zdnet.com/article/hackers-gained-access-to-mysa-gov-accounts-including-licence-and-rego-details/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Yesterday afternoon, South Australia's Department for Infrastructure and Transport confirmed that mySA Gov accounts were compromised through a cyber attack.</p> <p>mySA Gov is the South Australian government's online platform and app that provides residents with single account access for the state's services, such as checking into a venue or completing transactions for vehicle registration.</p> <p>The department said hackers accessed these accounts as account holders used the same or a similar password for their mySA Gov account as they had used for their account with an unrelated website. The hackers then used the passwords they had obtained from the unrelated website to access a number of mySA GOV accounts.</p> <p>The department did not provide details about the unrelated website.</p> <p>According to the ABC, 2,601 mySA Gov accounts were accessed in the attack, with 2,008 of them containing registration and licensing information.</p> <p>The department became aware of the breach on Tuesday, and has since blocked people from logging in if compromised passwords are used. It has also notified affected accountholders by email of the potential access to their account.</p> <p>The department said there was "no evidence of any unauthorised transactions" on the impacted accounts.</p> <p>"It is strongly recommended that when choosing a new password for their account, customers do not use a password that has been previously used or is currently being used for any other accounts," the Department for Infrastructure and Transport said in a statement.</p> <p>"This is timely reminder to all mySA Gov account holders and South Australians more generally to always set complex passwords and do not use the same password for more than one account."</p>

	As details could have been accessed by an unauthorised third party, the department has also encouraged all affected account holders to change their driver's licence number by attending a Service SA Centre.
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HEADLINE	11/04 AT&T, Verizon to delay 5G rollout
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/at-t-verizon-to-delay-5g-rollout-over-faas-airplane-safety-concerns-11636039555?mod=hp_lead_pos6
GIST	<p>AT&T Inc. and Verizon Communications Inc. agreed to delay their planned Dec. 5 rollout of a new 5G frequency band so they can work with the Federal Aviation Administration to address concerns about potential interference with key cockpit safety systems.</p> <p>The cellphone carriers said Thursday they would delay their planned 5G deployments until Jan. 5, responding to the aviation regulator's warnings while disputing claims that the proposed cellular signals would represent a danger.</p> <p>The FAA, a unit of the U.S. Transportation Department, had been planning to issue official mandates as soon as this week that would limit pilots' use of certain automated cockpit systems, such as those that help planes land in poor weather, according to government and industry officials familiar with the planned orders. Those limits would aim to avoid potential interference from wireless towers on the ground transmitting new 5G signals.</p> <p>Such limits for pilots could disrupt passenger and cargo flights in the 46 metropolitan areas where the towers are located, aviation industry officials have said.</p> <p>Telecom industry officials have disputed the need for more safeguards, saying that available evidence doesn't show that the proposed 5G signals will interfere with flight equipment. Cellphone carriers in some other countries already use the wireless frequencies in question.</p> <p>The Federal Communications Commission, which oversees telecom regulations, issued a statement with the FAA later Thursday confirming the voluntary pause. "Aviation safety and technology leadership are national priorities, and with today's announcement these companies have demonstrated their commitment to both," the federal agencies said, naming both carriers. The agencies said they would continue working closely together to ensure the U.S. keeps pace with the rest of the world regarding the latest communications technologies, without undue delay.</p> <p>Verizon, the country's largest wireless company by subscribers, said it postponed its rollout "in the spirit of good faith" but remained on track to bring 5G services over the frequency range in question, known as C-band, to 100 million Americans in early 2022.</p> <p>"We appreciate the FCC's work in its discussions with the FAA and others to ensure a data-driven analysis that will again demonstrate that 5G operations in this band pose no risk to flight safety," a Verizon spokesman said in a statement.</p> <p>AT&T said it would continue to work with the FCC and the FAA to understand the FAA's concerns. "It is critical that these discussions be informed by the science and the data," AT&T said. "That is the only path to enabling experts and engineers to assess whether any legitimate coexistence issues exist."</p> <p>Shares of Verizon fell 2.1% and AT&T declined 1.5% Thursday while broader U.S. stock indexes were mixed.</p> <p>C-band spectrum covers a swath of radio frequencies measured between 3.7 and 4.2 gigahertz. The spectrum is considered highly suitable for 5G networks and already serves cellphones in other countries. The technology, short for fifth-generation wireless, offers internet speeds much faster than today's 4G service.</p>

AT&T and Verizon spent tens of billions of dollars to buy the licenses for the 5G-friendly airwaves, with billions more reserved to compensate the band's previous satellite users and install new equipment. The two carriers and rival T-Mobile US Inc. also won licenses for C-band spectrum that would be activated in late 2023. Only a portion of the band was scheduled for cellular use in December.

The gradual pace of 5G infrastructure upgrades means AT&T and Verizon's one-month delay isn't likely to significantly alter their bottom lines, according to industry executives. But a longer pause could pressure the carriers. Verizon, which recently said more than a quarter of its users had upgraded to a 5G-capable smartphone, is counting on C-band frequencies to address the mounting demands from its customers' appetite for app downloads, games and streaming video.

"A month doesn't make that much of a difference," said Harold Feld, a telecom industry specialist at Public Knowledge, a Washington-based tech advocacy group. "What makes a difference is when it starts to look indefinite. Then you get to a situation where a whole investment cycle gets blown up."

Aviation industry groups have been warning federal officials about what they believe are potential safety implications from the new 5G service and potential economic fallout, according to people familiar with the matter.

A presentation by a coalition of aviation groups to White House officials was expected this week to warn that the potential FAA restrictions could result in airports or even regions being shut down as passengers and shippers experience flight cancellations, delays and diversions, according to a draft of the presentation seen by The Wall Street Journal.

The FAA had been expected to issue official mandates, known as airworthiness directives, that would restrict flights in U.S. airspace that require gauges known as radio altimeters that measure the distance between aircraft and the ground, according to a recent draft of a directive viewed by The Wall Street Journal.

The FAA and FCC have been tussling over the issue for months, though the plan to use the spectrum for cellular networks goes back several years. The FAA has sought specific data about 5G towers' locations, power and angles to determine whether they could interfere with planes' glide paths on final approach.

"At this time, the FAA has no way of determining which airports or areas within the U.S. have or will have 5G base stations or other devices that could provide interference with airplane systems," according to the FAA directive draft. The draft added that such interference "could lead to loss of continued safe flight and landing."

Earlier this week the FAA issued a special bulletin to pilots, airlines and aerospace manufacturers warning of the potential for 5G interference.

The FCC set its rules for use of the spectrum in early 2020 after reviewing the potential impact on aviation, creating a "guard band" as a buffer between the two uses. Some airplane equipment operates in nearby frequencies, between 4.2 and 4.4 GHz.

The FCC reviewed various industry studies about the safety risks and said in its March 2020 order that "well-designed equipment should not ordinarily receive any significant interference (let alone harmful interference)." The commission later issued new licenses that allowed wireless companies to start operating in parts of the C-band on Dec. 5 of this year, in addition to other frequencies already in use for 5G.

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HEADLINE	11/04 Facebook faces new antitrust lawsuit
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/04/technology/facebook-antitrust-lawsuit-phhphoto.html

SAN FRANCISCO — Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook’s chief executive, downloaded a popular new app, Phhphoto, on Aug. 8, 2014, and took a selfie. Other Facebook executives and product managers soon followed suit. The social network then made overtures to integrate Phhphoto.

But the interest of Facebook’s top executives in Phhphoto was just a show, according to a lawsuit filed on Thursday in the Eastern District of New York by the start-up, which is now defunct. Instead, Facebook simply wanted to squash the competition, according to the suit, which accused the company of antitrust violations.

In the suit, Phhphoto’s founders — Champ Bennett, Omar Elsayed and Russell Armand — claim that after Mr. Zuckerberg and other Facebook executives downloaded their app and approached them about a partnership, no deal materialized. Facebook instead launched a competing product that mirrored Phhphoto’s features. Facebook also suppressed Phhphoto’s content within its photo-sharing app, Instagram, the suit says.

Phhphoto is represented by Gary L. Reback, a well-known lawyer. In the 1990s, Mr. Reback persuaded the Justice Department to sue Microsoft for violating antitrust laws, a case that Microsoft ultimately settled in 2001. Phhphoto’s suit seeks unspecified monetary damages from Facebook.

The lawsuit stands out because of Mr. Zuckerberg’s personal involvement, Mr. Reback said in an interview. He called Mr. Zuckerberg “the monopolist’s C.E.O.” and said the Facebook founder had engaged in “anticompetitive conduct to an extent not seen since Bill Gates,” one of the founders of Microsoft.

“This suit is without merit and we will defend ourselves vigorously,” Joe Osborne, a spokesman for Meta, Facebook’s parent company, said late Thursday night.

The lawsuit is the most recent antitrust challenge to the world’s largest tech companies. Facebook, Google and Apple all have faced suits from rivals over the years, accusing them of copying their technology or buying them to squash them.

The lawsuit also adds to the woes for Facebook, which was last week [renamed Meta](#). The Federal Trade Commission has sued [the company, accusing it of violating antitrust laws](#) by holding a monopoly on social networking through its acquisitions of Instagram and the messaging app WhatsApp. The social network also has been under intense public scrutiny after Frances Haugen, a former employee, leaked thousands of internal documents detailing how the company’s platforms have been used to spread [misinformation](#), [hate speech](#) and conspiracies.

Even so, Michael Carrier, a professor at Rutgers University’s law school, said the standards for antitrust litigation remain high.

“It’s hard to show monopolization,” he said. “The tumult across the political landscape isn’t necessarily going to be reflected in how the courts rule.”

Phhphoto was founded in 2012 and the app was launched in 2014. People used it to edit photos and link images together into looping videos. It became buzzy and was promoted by celebrities such as Beyoncé, Miley Cyrus and Katy Perry.

After Mr. Zuckerberg downloaded the app in 2014, Kevin Systrom, a founder of Instagram, and senior managers at Facebook and Instagram also did so, according to the suit.

In February 2015, Bryan Hurren, then Facebook’s strategic partnerships manager, reached out to Phhphoto’s founders to discuss a “platform integration opportunity,” according to the suit. Mr. Hurren offered to integrate Phhphoto into Facebook’s News Feed, the suit says, which was prime real estate on the world’s largest social platform.

	<p>But “Facebook strung Phhhoto along for months without making meaningful progress on the supposed integration,” the suit says. Mr. Hurren told Phhhoto that Facebook was “hung up on some legal conversations,” the suit says.</p> <p>On March 31, 2015, Instagram changed its settings so that Phhhoto users couldn’t find their Instagram friends. When Phhhoto reached out to Facebook about the issue, Mr. Hurren told them “that Instagram was apparently upset that Phhhoto was growing in users through its relationship with Instagram,” according to the suit.</p> <p>Phhhoto’s founders decided to move forward with an Android version of their app, which had only been available on iPhones. But on Oct. 22, 2015, just hours before Phhhoto was set to launch its Android app, Instagram unveiled a product that was a “slavish clone” of Phhhoto, according to the suit.</p> <p>Instagram introduced other changes in March 2016 that reduced the visibility of Phhhoto’s content, the suit says.</p> <p>Phhhoto’s founders discovered the change when one of them posted two videos to Instagram, one through his Phhhoto-linked account and the other through a new Instagram account he had opened. While the second account had a fraction of the followers, the video was viewed and liked more than the identical video posted to the Phhhoto-linked account, according to the suit.</p> <p>Phhhoto shut down in June 2017, “lacking investment or any other means to remain viable,” according to the suit.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 Telephone oriented attack delivery
SOURCE	https://www.proofpoint.com/us/blog/threat-insight/caught-beneath-landline-411-telephone-oriented-attack-delivery
GIST	<p>Key Takeaways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proofpoint researchers observe tens of thousands of telephone oriented cyberattacks daily. • There are two types of these threats regularly observed by Proofpoint. One features traditional call center fraud, such as fake tech support, to steal money. The second leverages call centers to distribute malware that could be used for secondary compromises. • Proofpoint is aware of individual victims losing nearly \$50,000 per attack. It is likely that number is greater. • Malware distributed in some of the observed campaigns could lead to ransomware and pose a greater risk to business operations. <p>Overview</p> <p>Proofpoint researchers have observed an increase in attacks perpetuated by threat actors leveraging a robust ecosystem of call center-based email threats. The attacks rely on victims to call the attackers directly and initiate the interaction. Email fraud supported by call center customer service agents is prolific and profitable. In many cases, victims lose tens of thousands of dollars stolen directly from their bank accounts.</p> <p>There are two types of call center threat activity regularly observed by Proofpoint. One uses free, legitimate remote assistance software to steal money. The second leverages the use of malware disguised as a document to compromise a computer and can lead to follow-on malware. The second attack type is frequently associated with BazaLoader malware and is often referred to as BazaCall. Both attack types are what Proofpoint considers telephone-oriented attack delivery (TOAD).</p> <p>In recent attacks, threat actors email a victim claiming to be representatives from entities like Justin Bieber ticket sellers, computer security services, COVID-19 relief funds, or online retailers, promising refunds for mistaken purchases, software updates, or financial support. The emails contain a phone number for</p>

customer assistance. When the victims call the number for help, they are connected with a malicious call center attendant directly and the attack begins.

Proofpoint detects and blocks tens of thousands of email threats related to TOAD every day. Our researchers tracked down the perpetrators to multiple areas of operations, and through email data, phone conversations, and message and infrastructure artifacts, can now provide an exclusive look at how the thriving call center threat business profits on lies.

Call Center Threats

Most consumers are familiar with phone-based fraud and regularly receive unsolicited phone calls from people pretending to be, for instance, tech support or the Department of Motor Vehicles. According to a [2021 study](#) conducted by Truecaller, nearly 60 million Americans have reportedly lost money due to phone fraud, losing \$29.8 billion between 2020 and 2021. The recent spike in TOAD threats observed by Proofpoint is a subset of these threats, combining old-fashioned phone fraud with unsolicited emails as an initial communication vector.

These types of attacks include elaborate infection chains requiring significant victim interaction to infiltrate a victim's computer or smartphone. The threat actor sends an email typically with a receipt for a large purchase masquerading as a company or organization and instructs the recipient to call the number in the email to cancel or dispute their purchase. The email address is usually a Gmail, Yahoo, or other freemail account. If the user calls the phone number provided in the email, a customer service representative will verbally guide the user to visit a website or mobile app store. They will guide them through different types of user interaction such as downloading a malicious file, allowing them to remotely access their machine, or downloading a malicious application for remote access.

While the two distinct TOAD types begin the same – victim receives an email and is directed to call a customer service representative – the attack paths diverge depending on the objective.

Financial extortion actors typically use invoice lures associated with companies like Amazon, Paypal, or security software. Once a person calls the number listed in the email, the actor will direct the victim to install remote access software such as AnyDesk, Teamviewer, Zoho, etc. and provide them access to interact with the machine under the guise of customer service. Often, the victim is directed to login to their bank account to get a refund, or purchase gift cards. Once the attacker is connected, they blackout the screen to hide their activities. They might edit the HTML of the banking webpage to show a different amount or attempt to steal the money directly.

In malware focused attacks like BazaCall, the invoice lures are often more elaborate, including themes such as Justin Bieber concerts, [lingerie](#), and [fake movie sites](#). The victim is directed to a malicious website where they are told to download a document to facilitate a refund, but instead are infected with malware.

Once the attackers have obtained access to the device, they can access banking, email, and other private accounts or download follow-on malware including ransomware. By leveraging attack chains that require a lot of human interaction, threat actors can bypass some automated threat detection services that only flag on malicious links or attachments in email.

Popular Call Center Lures

The lures and themes threat actors send to victims vary, from very low effort attempts to leveraging legitimate branding and document downloads. Our researchers frequently engage with threat actors to better understand the attack paths and behaviors exhibited by these actors.

PayPal Lure

For example, our researcher identified a financially motivated TOAD threat masquerading as a PayPal invoice from a U.S. weapons manufacturer.

Our researcher called the number in the invoice and connected with “David” pretending to be a PayPal representative. “David” followed a script and told our researcher to download AnyDesk and login to his

bank account. The attacker also claimed that someone had tried to purchase a weapon using his PayPal account and warned him that “hackers” regularly access people’s accounts to make purchases. In total, the conversation took approximately an hour.

Justin Bieber Lure

Other campaigns use pop culture themed lures, including posing as ticket sellers to The Weeknd concerts or the upcoming 2022 Justin Bieber world tour. These lures are associated with BazaCall threats. When our researcher called the number in the Justin Bieber email, he was immediately placed on hold with the pop star’s music.

When our researcher called the BazaCall threat actors, a person named “John Edwards” claimed someone had erroneously placed an order on his credit card and to visit [ziddat\[.\]com/code.exe](#) to get a refund. Our researcher downloaded the executable in a virtual machine, and told “John” nothing came up on the screen. BazaLoader was successfully downloaded, and “John” said he could take care of the issue before abruptly hanging up. In total, the call took approximately 10 minutes.

Threat Actors

Although it is difficult to narrow down activity into specific threat activity groups associated with TOAD threats, Proofpoint researchers have identified multiple activity clusters located in India. Most of the activity occurs in three cities: Kolkata, Mumbai, and New Delhi.

Proofpoint was able to pin down multiple physical locations of activity clusters based on the threat actors’ interactions with Proofpoint researchers as well as open-source information shared on fraud forums and YouTube...

During our research, threat actors accessed researchers’ computers directly, and Proofpoint researchers were able to siphon data such as IP information from the remote access connections. Additionally, some independent “scam baiters” have remote access to threat actors’ physical [location](#) and share their findings on [YouTube](#) and [TikTok](#).

Based on [publicly available](#) information, Proofpoint was able to identify the office allegedly used by one cluster of tech support TOAD actors located in Kolkata...

These threat actors reportedly targeted people in Germany, the U.S., Australia, and India with fraudulent tech support claims.

Malicious call centers are architected like legitimate businesses. Owners sign leases on buildings purporting to be telemarketers or other phone-based businesses, and recruit [local jobseekers](#) to support the operation. Due to job scarcity in areas of operation and potential for higher earnings than alternative employment, the [lucrative phone fraud jobs](#) are alluring. While conducting calls with the threat actors, Proofpoint researchers overheard floor managers guiding employees through a script on how to speak to victims. Employees’ pay varies. According [to the BBC](#), earnings may start at 1 rupee for every \$1 stolen and increase to \$50,000 per month.

While financially motivated and malware-focused TOAD actors have similar techniques, Proofpoint researchers have observed that BazaLoader threat actors do not appear to use physical call center facilities, and fake customer service agents are usually not located in India. Proofpoint assesses with moderate confidence the actors use inbound call center software then route the calls to geographically dispersed customer service agents. The agents distributing BazaLoader do not remotely access victims’ machines; rather they direct them to a website to download a malicious file that loads the malware. Thus, the fake customer service agents do not require as much technical aptitude as other cybercrime actors.

The increasingly widespread adoption of threats requiring victims to initiate engagement with their attackers indicates that participants in the cybercriminal ecosystem likely learn from each other and will shape tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) based on efficacy observed by their fellow threat actors.

Victimology

Call center-based email threat actors do not appear to specifically target people via demographics, jobs, location, etc., but likely procure their contact lists from legitimate data brokerages or other telemarketer resources. And while the public typically hears about activities impacting victims from vulnerable communities including the elderly and disabled, according to the 2021 [TrueCaller report](#), men are impacted more than women, and younger men are more likely than older men to be victims of a phone scam. *(Analyst note: This data includes all phone-based spam and scams and are not specific to call center-based email threats.)*

Like many victims of crime, people who lose money to cyberattacks may feel ashamed and embarrassed, and do not share details of what occurred. This makes it difficult for researchers, law enforcement, and the public to understand the true number of people impacted by call center-based email fraud. But the losses can be life-altering. Proofpoint is aware of victims losing nearly \$50,000 in one attack, with the threat actor masquerading as a NortonLifeLock representative. And the fallout of cybercrime – like the financial toll, and emotional well-being – [reportedly](#) disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities

Impacts to Organizations

TOAD threat actor targeting is indiscriminate and includes both personal email accounts – Gmail, Yahoo, Hotmail, etc. – and corporate email addresses. Proofpoint has observed BazaCall operators targeting employees of large organizations, and a successful infection could compromise the entire enterprise network leading to follow on attacks such as [ransomware](#).

Targeting individuals' private email addresses could have follow-on impacts to corporations. For example, as COVID-19 has caused a shift to remote work, more people are accessing personal information online from work devices or accounts. Additionally, TeamViewer and AnyDesk are legitimate enterprise software services that may be already installed on corporate machines; if the software allows external connections, the activity could bypass other enterprise security protections that may be in place to detect and block remote access attempts. A threat actor may successfully obtain remote access to a corporate managed device and install malware that could facilitate follow-on activity such as ransomware.

Proofpoint assesses small and medium-sized businesses are at greatest risk for TOAD threats impacting the corporate environment.

APPENDIX

The following is a list of company names Proofpoint regularly observes in call center-based email threat campaigns.

- Norton
- McAfee
- Ebay
- Nort-Pro
- PayPal
- GeekSquad
- NortonLifeLock
- Covid-19 relief /AOL Fund
- AOL Committee
- VakıfBank
- Santander Bank
- IMF Giving
- Amazon
- Justin Bieber Justice World Tour
- The Weeknd T O U R
- Springfield Armory
- Symantec
- Meagher Auto Insurance

HEADLINE	11/04 Scammers used Google ads to steal \$500K
SOURCE	https://blog.checkpoint.com/2021/11/04/scammers-used-google-ads-to-steal-500k-worth-of-cryptocurrency/
GIST	<p>Check Point Research (CPR) warns of scammers using Google Ads to steal crypto wallets, after seeing hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of cryptocurrency taken from victims this past weekend. Scammers are placing ads at the top of Google Search that imitate popular wallet brands, such as Phantom and MetaMask, to trick users into giving up their wallet passphrase and private key.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPR estimates that over \$500k worth of crypto was stolen in a matter of days • CPR shares screenshots of the malicious Google Ads and phishing websites that navigated victims into theft • CPR urges the crypto community to stay on high-alert, offering five safety tips for people on how to stay protected <p>Over the weekend, Check Point Research (CPR) observed hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of crypto stolen from wallets by scammers. To lure their victims, scammers placed Google Ads at the top of Google Search that imitated popular wallets and platforms, such as Phantom App, MetaMask and Pancake Swap. Each advertisement contained a malicious link that, once clicked, directed a victim into a phishing website that copied the brand and messaging of the original wallet website. From here, the scammers tricked their victims into giving up their wallet passwords, setting the stage for wallet theft.</p> <p>Traditionally, phishing campaigns originate in email. In what appears to be a new trend, multiple scamming groups are now bidding for wallet-related keywords on Google Ads, using Google Search as an attack vector to target victims' crypto wallets.</p> <p>How the Scam Works</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scammer places a Google Ad to appear first on a search query related to a crypto wallet 2. Victim clicks on malicious link in Google Ad 3. Victim is navigated to a phishing website that looks identical to the original wallet website 4. The fake website attempts to steal your passphrase, if you already have a wallet; or will provide you with a new passphrase for your newly created wallet 5. In both ways, the scammer gains access to your wallet and can proceed to steal all your cryptocurrency <p>What the Scams Look Like</p> <p>For the domain "phantom.app", CPR encountered phishing variants like phantom.app or phantonn.app, or even different extensions like ".pw" and more.</p> <p>As described above, each malicious advertisement leads to a phishing website.</p> <p>Victims Observed</p> <p>CPR found 11 compromised wallet accounts, each of them containing between \$1K to \$10K. CPR went onto learn that the scammers withdrew some of the funds already before CPR's discovery. By cross-referencing Reddit forums where victims voiced their theft, CPR estimates that over \$500k was stolen over the past weekend.</p> <p>Quote: Oded Vanunu, Head of Products Vulnerabilities Research at Check Point:</p> <p><i>"In a matter of days, we witnessed the theft of hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of crypto. We estimate that over \$500k worth of crypto was stolen this past weekend alone. I believe we're at the advent of a new cyber crime trend, where scammers will use Google Search as a primary attack vector to reach crypto wallets, instead of traditionally phishing through email. In our observation, each advertisement had careful messaging and keyword selection, in order to stand out in search results. The phishing websites where victims were directed to reflected meticulous copying and imitation of wallet brand messaging. And what's most alarming is that multiple scammer groups are bidding for keywords on Google Ads, which is likely a signal of the success of these new phishing campaigns that are geared to heist crypto wallets. Unfortunately, I expect this to become a fast-growing trend in cyber crime. I strongly urge the crypto</i></p>

	<i>community to double check the URLs they click on and avoid clicking on Google Ads related to crypto wallets at this time.”</i>
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HEADLINE	11/04 Ukraine: Gamaredon members link to FSB
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/ukraine-discloses-identity-of-gamaredon-members-links-it-to-russias-fsb/
GIST	<p>The Ukrainian Security Service (SSU) has revealed today the real identities of five members of the Gamaredon cyber-espionage group, linking its members to the Crimean branch of the Russian Federal Security Service (FSB).</p> <p>Officials said the group—which the SSU tracks internally as Armageddon but is more widely known in cybersecurity circles as Gamaredon—operated from the city of Sevastopol, Crimea, but acted on orders from the FSB Center for Information Security (also known as “Center 18”) in Moscow, a known hub for the FSB’s cyber operations.</p> <p>Five members were identified by name and position and the SSU said it sent them “notices of high treason”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chernykh Mykola Serhiiiovych (head of the 4th section of SCO of the FSB Sevastopol branch) • Sklianko Oleksandr Mykolaiovych (deputy chief of the 4th section of SCO of the FSB Sevastopol branch) • Starchenko Anton Oleksandrovyeh (officer of the 4th section of SCO of the FSB Sevastopol branch) • Sushchenko Oleh Oleksandrovyeh (officer of the 4th section of SCO of the FSB Sevastopol branch) • Miroshnychenko Oleksandr Valeriiovych (officer of the 4th section of SCO of the FSB Sevastopol branch) <p>“They were officers of the ‘Crimean’ FSB, as well as traitors who sided with the enemy during the occupation of the peninsula in 2014,” the SSU said today in a press release.</p> <p>To support parts of its claims, the SSU also published intercepted phone conversations between two of the Gamaredon members regarding attacks they were carrying out and complaints they had with their FSB salaries.</p> <p>Although previous reports from multiple cyber-security companies have linked the group to a suspected Russian government entity, today’s SSU press release marks the first time that the Gamaredon group has been linked to the FSB.</p> <p>One of the most active groups targeting Ukraine</p> <p>Known as Gamaredon (Eset, PaloAlto), Primitive Bear (CrowdStrike), Winterflounder (iDefence), BlueAlpha (RecordedFuture), BlueOtso (PWC), IronTiden (SecureWorks), SectorC08 (Red Alert), and Callisto (NATO Association of Canada), the group began operations in June 2013, just months before Russia forcibly annexed the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine.</p> <p>Since that time, the SSU says the group has carried out more than 5,000 cyberattacks against more than 1,500 Ukrainian government systems.</p> <p>“The main purpose of its activity is to conduct targeted cyberintelligence operations against state bodies of Ukraine, primarily security, defense and law enforcement agencies, in order to obtain intelligence information,” the SSU said in a 35-page technical report [PDF] that accompanied its press release.</p> <p>The SSU report describes past Gamaredon attacks with terms such as “intrusiveness and audacity” and suggesting that the group had not been focused on staying “secret for a long time.”</p>
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HEADLINE	11/05 Bitcoin price turns around: snaps skid
SOURCE	https://www.foxbusiness.com/markets/bitcoin-price-11-5-2021
GIST	<p>Bitcoin was trading 0.4% higher Friday morning.</p> <p>The price was around \$62,100 per coin, while rival Ether, the world's second-largest cryptocurrency, is trading around \$4,530, down from Wednesday's all time high of \$4,643.</p> <p>Dogecoin was trading around 26 cents per coin, respectively, according to Coindesk.</p> <p>Payments firm Square said in its quarterly earnings letter Thursday that its peer-to-peer payment service, Cash App, generated \$1.82 billion of bitcoin revenue and \$42 million of gross profit, up 115% and 29% year over year, respectively.</p> <p>Bitcoin revenue and gross profit decreased in the third quarter versus the second quarter, reported by Coindesk.</p> <p>Square also noted bitcoin revenue and gross profit may fluctuate in future quarters given changes in customer demand and bitcoin's market price.</p> <p>Square's total net revenue was \$3.84 billion, up 27% year over year, while gross profit was \$1.13 billion, up 43% year over year.</p>
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Terror Conditions

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HEADLINE	11/05 Taliban, ousted Afghan govt. claim UN seat
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-11-05/taliban-ousted-afghanistan-government-both-claim-un-seat
GIST	<p>The Taliban returned to power in Afghanistan almost three months ago, and senior United Nations officials and Western leaders are in regular contact with the Islamic militant group. So are foreign aid organizations, which coordinate with the Taliban on everything from food deliveries to medical assistance as it works to keep Afghanistan from collapsing.</p> <p>But on the matter of international recognition, world powers aren't quite there yet.</p> <p>At a meeting this month, a UN committee that includes China, Russia, and the U.S. is widely expected to punt on rival requests for diplomatic representation—one from the UN ambassador of the deposed Afghan government and another from the Taliban. A deferral would allow Ghulam Isaczkai, who represents the ousted government of President Ashraf Ghani, to continue to act as Afghanistan's ambassador in New York, even though his government back home is long gone. Meanwhile, Suhail Shaheen, the Taliban diplomat nominated for the position in September, will likely have to wait his turn indefinitely.</p> <p>Getting him accredited isn't the Taliban's most pressing matter right now. About 19 million people, or half of Afghanistan's population, faces acute food insecurity, according to the UN. Rampant unemployment and a shortage of cash are putting urban residents—including the middle class—in danger of slipping into hardship as winter arrives.</p> <p>Yet the economic crisis and the matter of international recognition are linked: The lack of recognition makes it harder for the Taliban to receive much-needed aid. The Taliban is facing a cash crunch after the U.S. and its partners froze Afghanistan's access to more than \$9 billion in overseas assets, mostly central bank reserves held in American banks. The Biden administration has rejected appeals from Russia and China to release the assets as the situation worsens. On Nov. 3, the Taliban banned the use of foreign</p>

[currencies](#) and ordered the public to use local currency in a bid to ease the crisis. Funding from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund is also on hold.

UN officials, who have been shuttling in and out of Kabul, insist the flow of aid shouldn't be impeded. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has repeatedly called on countries to unfreeze Afghanistan's assets and allow development aid to reach the economy or risk watching it crumble. He has sought waivers to let in money from the IMF.

"We need to separate the political discussion from the humanitarian imperative," says Mary-Ellen McGroarty, the UN World Food Programme representative in Afghanistan. "The international community needs to extend a hand. There is a tsunami of destitution, incredible suffering, and hunger spiraling out of control across Afghanistan."

Many countries still question whether the Taliban, infamous for its brutal rule during the 1990s, merits international support. For now, the U.S. and its allies are trying to use recognition as a carrot of sorts, dangling it as a reward for if the Taliban reforms its approach to human rights, women's and girls' empowerment, and freedom of movement. They also want to make sure the Taliban is serious about stifling terrorism.

In a rare instance of unity, China, Europe, Russia, and the U.S. are roughly on the same page on the question of recognition, even though they differ on their priorities in Afghanistan. China and Russia are more intent on stopping the drug trade and combatting terrorism, while Sweden and the U.S. place more emphasis on human rights. "Nobody is in a hurry to recognize," Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia said on Oct. 29. "The question of recognition will arise when the international community makes sure that the promises and commitments that the [Taliban] authorities announced will be delivered."

After retaking power in August, the group pledged to respect the rights of women and minority communities and to give amnesty to those who worked with the U.S.-backed government, but [crackdowns](#) have been reported.

Asked how China plans to vote, Zhang Jun, Beijing's ambassador to the UN, says all members are looking at the issue in a "prudent manner" and China will act on the "basis of international law." Sweden, which chairs the nine-member credentials committee, has declined to comment on the matter.

"It doesn't feel there is a strong bloc of countries ready to make this leap," says Richard Gowan, who oversees the UN work of the International Crisis Group, a nongovernmental organization. "They are looking for a way to kick this down the road for now."

It's an unusual, but not unprecedented, situation to have rival claims to a UN seat. In a rare coincidence, the committee will consider [competing claims for Myanmar's seat](#) as well in its meeting this month. Myanmar's junta, which took control in February, has put forth its candidate even as Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun, the representative in New York nominated by the ousted government of Aung San Suu Kyi, has asked to renew his UN accreditation.

Kyaw Moe Tun has the backing of Myanmar's National Unity Government, a shadow government set up by Suu Kyi's allies, while Isaczai represents a government with no real aspiration of coming back. Yet a precedent for keeping Isaczai in his chair exists: When the Taliban ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, the ambassador of the ousted government at that time remained in place as the UN credentials committee deferred its decision.

There's also the option to keep the seat empty. In 1997 the committee deferred a decision on rival claims to represent Cambodia and left its UN seat vacant instead. A coalition formed in Cambodia the following year and its candidate was approved to take the seat, which resolved the issue.

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SOURCE	https://english.alaraby.co.uk/analysis/rise-jihadist-groups-africa
GIST	<p>While ten years ago there were only two significant Africa-based violent extremist groups - Nigeria-based Boko Haram and Somalia-based al-Shabab – a new report by HORN International Institute for Strategic Studies shows that today there are at least ten active extremist groups operating on the continent.</p> <p>Despite the number of global deaths linked to terrorist attacks declining since 2014, according to the Global Terrorism Index, the number of casualties in Africa, conversely, has dramatically increased. Moreover, the HORN IISS’ report finds that the expansion of militant groups in Africa corresponds with the decrease in similar activity in the Middle East following the ‘defeat’ of the Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria.</p> <p>IS and al-Qaeda affiliated groups have been rapidly spreading their influence across Africa, where the “Islamic State in the Greater Sahara” killed hundreds of civilians in 2021 alone and carried out attacks in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the insurgency earlier this year by local Islamic State affiliate - named Al-Shabab - in northern Mozambique, which saw the jihadists seize and hold the strategic port of Mocimboa da Praia in Cabo Delgado province near the border with Tanzania, is a clear sign that the continent is facing the threat of an eruption of terrorism that could have far-reaching implications.</p> <p>Militant groups are emerging in a vacuum created by corruption, a lack of political cohesion, and weak governance in the continent, while often exploiting accumulated ethnic and religious divisions.</p> <p>But could there be a scenario, as in the case of Afghanistan, where a weak state or neglected region could be overwhelmed by a militant movement?</p> <p>Following the Taliban's playbook?</p> <p>While it is difficult to estimate the exact strengths of these groups, Simon Schofield, the Deputy Director of the Human Security Centre, thinks that it is unlikely that any of these movements are well established enough to seize full control of the apparatus of a state like Mali or Mozambique as the Taliban did.</p> <p>Nevertheless, Emily Estelle, a Research Fellow and Research Manager at the American Enterprise Institute’s Critical Threats Project, thinks that several African Salafi-jihadi groups are following the Taliban’s playbook - particularly al-Shabab in Somalia and al-Qaeda’s affiliate Jama’at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) in Mali.</p> <p>While they see the Taliban takeover as a sign that playing the long game will work, and have drawn parallels between themselves and the Taliban through their propaganda, Estelle said that it is premature to say that these groups are about to topple the Somali and Malian governments - particularly because even the external forces that are withdrawing (like the French in Mali) are trying to prevent an Afghanistan redux.</p> <p>The greater risk, in Schofield’s opinion, is that “insurgencies build to the point of civil war within the affected countries of North Africa and the Sahel, or the threat that these places could become safe havens for terrorist groups from which external operations could be launched further afield”.</p> <p>Such concerns have been expressed recently in the case of Mozambique, with fears of militant expansion into south-eastern parts of Africa leading to the creation of a permanent safe haven for extremist groups. While Al-Shabab in Mozambique (not related to the Somali group) does have global ties, its fate is unlikely to be decided by Middle East forces, according to Tom Sheehy, a distinguished fellow at the United States Institute for Peace’s Africa Center.</p> <p>So far, it has mainly lived off the land in northern Mozambique’s Cabo Delgado, while Estelle observes that there are also structural limits that hinder the development of the group compared to some of the other Islamic State affiliates on the continent, including the relative remoteness of its location. For</p>

now, “its’ capabilities are rudimentary compared to many other groups - it lacks a propaganda apparatus and the ability to use bombs in its attacks, for example,” she told *The New Arab*.

After all, Sheehy recalled, “Cabo Delgado does not have a history of supporting such extremist movements.” The Rwandan and [Southern African Development Community's Standby Force](#) (SADC) troops have made some good progress, but it will take years of improved security, governance, and economic development to achieve peace and security.

But while African extremist groups’ connections with global groups vary from case to case, they are certainly inspired by their Middle Eastern “brothers-in-arms”, and, according to Max Abrahms, an expert in international security and associate professor of political science at Northeastern University, the Taliban’s victory is no different in the sense that it is attracting widespread admiration from other militant groups around the world.

For Sheehy, it is hard to draw African parallels with Afghanistan because we should not underestimate the uniqueness of local conditions throughout the continent. In fact, there is a blurred line between jihadism, organised crime, brewing ethnic conflicts amplified by grave economic conditions, climate change, and migration flows.

Connections with global groups

While many African terrorist groups present themselves as franchises of global movements such as the Islamic State group and al-Qaeda to bolster their image, their true connections with core groups and their leadership “vary and are frankly difficult to gauge”, said Sheehy.

Dr Akinola Olojo, a Senegal-based senior researcher in the Lake Chad Basin programme at the Institute for Security Studies, observes that these ties are nurtured by mutually beneficial factors based on image projection but also ideological guidance, and to some degree, financial support.

For instance, in the context of the Lake Chad Basin countries (Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria) where the so-called [Islamic State West Africa Province \(ISWAP\)](#) is active, the aftermath of the death of Boko Haram’s factional leader Abubakar Shekau was characterised by an endorsement from IS for ISWAP’s expansion in the region.

However, the main strength of these terrorist groups is that they are highly decentralised by design, explained John Rugaber, an analyst at [Encyclopaedia Geopolitica](#) and former US Army Captain with multiple tours to Iraq and Afghanistan. In a similar vein, Schofield further explained that the Western idea of al-Qaeda’s structure, that of the ‘core’ and the ‘franchises’, is somewhat of a myth.

“Many of the leaders of the al-Qaeda branches, including in Africa, are also senior figures within the central leadership,” he told *The New Arab*, giving the example of a former leader of [al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb](#) (AQIM), Abdulmalek Droukdel, who was killed last June in Mali. As well as being the Emir of AQIM and swearing a personal “bay’ah” to Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, he [has been identified](#) as a member of al-Qaeda’s ‘management committee’ and was clearly involved in the global as well as regional theatre.

This is not an exception, Schofield continued, as most of al-Qaeda’s regional emirs play a greater role in the central leadership of the organisation than is commonly recognised, and could call on those resources and support for their movement if needed. “As al-Qaeda is likely to reconstitute itself in Afghanistan, it is likely that two-way support will increase,” he told *The New Arab*.

Yet, while IS and al-Qaeda remain major threats across great swathes of Africa, it is unlikely that their affiliated groups will merge and establish some greater transnational super organisation, according to Schofield, as at the moment they are fighting one another for supremacy, perhaps most intensely in West Africa, where the Islamic State West Africa Province [accused al-Qaeda](#) of starting a war with them last year.

Middle East rivalries

Middle Eastern rivalries spilling over into the African continent also add complexity and tensions within many African states, contributing to divisions in the security services of various countries, which in turn create opportunities for Salafi-jihadi groups. External influence is particularly evident in the Horn of Africa but also in Libya, where Turkey deployed its foreign legion, the Syrian National Army, to fight on behalf of the Muslim Brotherhood-aligned Government of National Accord (GNA).

This legion, according to Schofield, is largely composed of Syrian militants, including former IS and Jabhat al Nusra (al-Qaeda in Syria) fighters.

Iran is also seen as a potential source of instability. Schofield recalls that Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei [tweeted a photo](#) of Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky, the leader of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria, Africa's most prominent Shia Islamist movement, calling him an important supporter of the Iranian revolution. Iran has also provided Hezbollah-style training and assistance to Shia Nigerians.

Furthermore, Schofield noted, "in Somalia, Iran is operating a logistics network to transport weapons to the Houthis in Yemen and is supporting al-Shabab against the government. In North Africa, Iran has been accused by Morocco of using Hezbollah to train separatist militants of the Polisario Front, which is fighting for Western Sahara independence. If Iran follows its Middle Eastern playbook in Africa, it is clear that stability is not a likely outcome".

In this context, Rugaber said that "any time a sponsor picks a side in non-homogenous societies or cultures, the risks are very high, as the sponsored have their own agenda and might just be using the sponsor's wealth and power, like in case of the US backing of the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan".

Africa faces tough challenges in the future

However, the Afghanistan debacle clearly shows that relying entirely on security efforts can have disastrous consequences. Given that Europeans and the US seem to be ever less motivated to continue a significant presence on the continent (as the announced partial French [withdrawal](#) from Mali suggests), many African governments face huge challenges when it comes to suppressing terrorism.

In Schofield's view, Western intervention against militants is likely to be more in the form of drone strikes and support for local governments than 'boots on the ground' responses. The Americans, for example, established a new airbase in Niger near to Agadez in 2018, but to date, there are no known drone strikes emanating from this base, he added. It has been used to fly surveillance missions, but of course, the option remains to use armed drones from this base.

While the overall international strategy will likely remain focused on military efforts, Estelle finds such an approach highly problematic because poor governance is the key factor allowing Salafi-jihadi groups to take root and spread across the continent. Indeed, governance structures, especially in the Sahel region, in many cases have failed to provide basic security to large sections of the population while their militaries have often been perceived as oppressors.

Moreover, their forces are often poorly trained, corrupt, and unmotivated and therefore prone to desert their posts. Although no Western counterterrorism actors were planning a total withdrawal from Africa, she told *The New Arab* that "neither the focus nor the scale of the current counterterrorism response matches the problem".

Although the challenges posed by violent extremism or terrorism persist, efforts on several levels are being made by African countries. The implementation of territorial action plans and the intervention pillars of what is known as the Lake Chad Basin Commission's Regional Stabilisation Strategy, for example, is one of the crucial steps for successfully battling extremism, according to Olojo.

Defence ministers from the G5 Sahel countries - Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger - have also been planning more [joint military operations](#) and greater "hearts and minds" engagement. Olojo thinks that it is essential that affected countries across continental divides cooperate through platforms such as the Global Coalition Against Daesh.

In his opinion, it is also essential that governments work more closely with affected communities and address governance gaps and socio-economic vulnerabilities that push individuals towards violent extremism. However, the fundamentals such as political will, accountability, resource management, and governance cannot be imported, nor copied and pasted from outside Africa.

These essentials, according to Olojo, must be inspired from within Africa and “the sooner country leadership begins to be more sensitive towards working more sincerely with the various constituencies that elected them, the better and more authentic solutions will be”.

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HEADLINE	11/04 Afghan women under Taliban rule
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/y3vzjv/my-dreams-are-dead-afghan-women-on-life-under-taliban-rule
GIST	<p>Despite the Taliban making vague promises to be more tolerant than they were when they last ruled, little has changed, especially for women. Since the militant group completed their lightning-fast takeover of Afghanistan in August, they have banned girls from secondary school and universities; restricted women from most workplaces; and, most recently, opened fire at female protesters who dared to speak out against them in Kabul.</p> <p>Following the US invasion in 2001, conditions for Afghan women changed as many were able to build careers in a variety of fields. But with the Taliban in control once again, women are rarely seen in public life, if at all. Women journalists have disappeared from local TV, while politicians and other government officials have been sent home and replaced by Taliban members.</p> <p>In a video published on social media, the Taliban’s Acting Minister of Higher Education described those who had graduated over the last two decades as being “out of use”, effectively cancelling the college degrees of hundreds of thousands of people. After protests by Afghan women took place in Kabul in the days and weeks after the takeover, the Taliban responded by banning any demonstrations that do not receive prior approval. Now women protesters rarely, if ever, dare to take to the streets.</p> <p>“The Taliban’s treatment of women is like cutting the wing of a bird who always wants to fly,” Rahela Jafari, who led recent protests against the Taliban and has now fled the country, told VICE World News via WhatsApp. “In the past, women had a goal and motivation, but all of that died.”</p> <p>Asked if she had any reason at all to be optimistic about the future of women in Afghanistan, Jafari said: “We are facing a government which doesn’t recognise women as part of the society. We are not optimistic but we will continue our campaign.”</p> <p>“Before the collapse, I was helping the poor, providing shelter to poor women through my NGO, now I cannot even help myself,” Taranom Sayeedi, who was once a social activist and now fled Afghanistan, told VICE World News via WhatsApp. It took me years to get to this position. I wanted to be involved in my country’s politics, become a member of parliament. But now all my dreams are dead and not achievable.”</p> <p>Western governments have tied any formal recognition of the Taliban to them making a commitment to observe human rights. The Taliban have offered some small concessions to a few women working certain essential jobs. In some situations, women have actually been asked to return to work in response to severe staffing shortages, such as for doctors, teachers and nurses. In recent weeks, they have asked women who worked at hospitals and other medical centres, as well as Afghanistan’s Central Passport Department, to return to work. The Taliban have also paid the salaries of some Afghan government women employees while still asking them to stay home.</p> <p>For women entrepreneurs, however, the story is very different. Keyarang Saadat, who fled the country after protesting against the Taliban last month, had launched a fashion store in the capital Kabul. Like many others, she is not optimistic about the future for business owners in Afghanistan.</p>

“I wanted to show my culture to the world,” Saadat, who employed nearly 80 women, told VICE World News. “I wanted to be a trade woman in the region, but now that’s just impossible. All of my employees were independent like me, but I don’t know what they will do now, how will they feed themselves or their families.”

After a [deadly and chaotic evacuation at Kabul airport last August](#), Western governments are focused on evacuating their Afghan affiliates through Pakistan and Qatar, which have maintained ties to the Taliban.

Meanwhile, the collapsing economy remains a vital threat to Afghans. Hundreds of people are trying to migrate to neighbouring Iran to find jobs. The small roads leading to the Afghan presidential palace in Kabul are strewn with home furnishings of people trying to sell their things to get cash to help themselves get out of the country.

“Everyone is trying to get out of Afghanistan, they are selling whatever they have to survive,” Saadat, 28, said. “If anyone chooses to stay in Afghanistan their new generation will be illiterate and continue to live in darkness.”

Dozens of female journalists were among those who fled the country. Those who still continue to work in Afghanistan do so while fearing for their lives.

A TV presenter, who preferred not to be named because of the threats she faces, told VICE World News that people rarely criticise the Taliban publicly now, and TV stations are trying not to produce programs with women anchors.

Like so many others, she is desperately trying to leave the country and has contacted various international journalist organisations for help.

“I really don’t know what’s going to happen next,” she told VICE World News via WhatsApp, adding that a group of Taliban fighters had recently knocked on the door of her house in Kabul. “I’ll leave as soon as I get any opportunity.”

The Taliban have banned women teachers from teaching in boy’s primary schools, causing a shortage of teachers. They have been asked to stay home until an unknown date.

“We had a motivation to work or to continue our studies, but now that the Taliban don’t allow women to play a role in politics or government, there is no reason for us to continue,” a Kabul University student told VICE World News.

Private universities have also fired some of its staff while dozens of its female students, who were paying their fees from their wages, have been forced to abandon their studies. “Our life after the Taliban return has just turned to hell,” said a private university lecturer from Kabul. “It’s hard for women to even breathe under Taliban rule.”

“We just count days and nights here now,” said an 18-year-old student from Kabul. “There is no hope.”

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HEADLINE	11/04 Afghan activists targeted by Taliban
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/nov/04/they-stayed-to-fight-the-taliban-now-the-protesters-are-being-hunted-down
GIST	<p>A month ago, Reshmin was busy organising protests against Taliban rule in online groups of hundreds of fellow women’s rights activists. Now the 26-year-old economics graduate must operate clandestinely, dressing in disguise and only demonstrating with a select few.</p> <p>“If things continue like this, there will be no future for women in Afghanistan. It’s better if the future never arrives,” says Reshmin, who spoke to the Guardian using only her first name, which means “silk” in</p>

Farsi, out of security concerns. “Each time we go out, we say farewell because we might not make it back alive.”

Since the Taliban’s lightning takeover of the country in August, Reshmin and her younger sister have attended a flurry of protests in Kabul, part of nationwide demonstrations where Afghan women have hoisted signs demanding the right to education and work, and chanted slogans such as “Freedom!” and “Eliminating women means eliminating human beings!”

They belong to a cohort of Afghan women’s rights defenders who chose not to flee this summer but stayed to tackle the Taliban’s clampdown on their freedoms. Buoyed up by the past 20 years of international support and encouragement, they have staged pockets of protest across Afghanistan, from quiet parks to urban thoroughfares. The Taliban have responded with violence, beating women with [electric batons](#) and detaining and [torturing the reporters](#) who covered the protests.

“The next generation will be brainwashed by the Taliban’s ideology, then it will spread like the Covid-19 virus. The world needs to pay attention for its own sake,” Reshmin says.

But international pressure to hold the Taliban accountable over the rights of women and girls is being ignored. A slew of foreign delegations, aid agencies and donors, including from the UK, have consisted of all-male teams and only “legitimises the Taliban’s patriarchal view of the world”, Heather Barr, of [Human Rights Watch](#), warned this week.

Now, two months into Taliban rule, the activists say they are being hunted down. In recent weeks the Taliban have accelerated their crackdown on women’s groups by infiltrating and intimidating them.

Activists described how on several occasions members of the Taliban appeared at a private address that was only discussed on closed chat groups on social media. Ahead of a recent protest in Kabul, Taliban police called a group of women on their phones just before they set out to put up posters, Reshmin says.

“The only tool they know is to silence people through creating fear,” says Mina, a university professor and activist, who asked that a pseudonym be used for fear of retribution from the Taliban.

Zahra, another organiser in Kabul, describes methods ranging from having women pose as journalists to obtain personal information from protesters to spreading rumours among activists that their number had been shared with members of the Taliban.

“The Taliban know if they lash us on the street they’ll look bad and get criticised,” says Zahra, “but it’s easy to try to dismantle women’s groups online.”

Zahra, who obtained her master’s degree in urban design last year, was supervising the building of a women-only outdoor market when the Taliban swept to power. The European-funded project has been abandoned and she now pours all her energy into activism.

Last month the Taliban banned all demonstrations that do not have official approval, adding the requirement that slogans at the protests also be approved by the group first.

Mina says this is a tactic designed to expose them. “They are trying to identify some of the active members of the women’s movement. This is how they force them to submit,” she says.

Reshmin, who was protesting on Kabul’s streets last week, says she will not ask the Taliban for permission because “that would mean we have accepted their regime”.

Since the Taliban captured Kabul just over two months ago, there has been a cascade of miserable news for Afghan women and barely a day passes without their rights shrinking further as they are dismissed from jobs in state media, banned from most other work and secondary school, barred from sport and blocked from a now-obsolete system designed to protect women from violence.

“We believed that Afghan women would not go back in time. We believed that our war against the Taliban would be won,” says Roya Dadras, spokeswoman of the now-defunct women’s affairs ministry, which the Taliban took over as the headquarters of its draconian morality police. She spoke to the Guardian from Australia, where she sought refuge in early October after spending a month in hiding in Kabul.

Compounding this is the country’s dire economic situation: the notoriously bitter Afghan winter is approaching, and with the foreign aid that powered the economy still largely suspended, 95% of Afghans are not getting enough to eat, the UN has warned.

The number of female activists on the streets is decreasing, and the strain of trying to put on a brave face amid their troubles is taking a toll on their health. Taliban members badly beat Reshmin’s sister at a protest, leaving her right hand unusable for a month, and her skin now suffers from painful flare-ups.

Reshmin’s mother and three sisters started taking antidepressants several weeks ago. Mina’s teenage daughter, whose education stopped with the Taliban’s ban on girls attending secondary school, became so stressed that she started to lose her hair. Mina shared a photo of the back of her daughter’s head where large areas of skin are exposed.

In Nangarhar province in the country’s east, where there is less international media attention than the Afghan capital, women’s rights protests have been violently broken up by Taliban members, says Rahmani, an activist and former prosecutor. Several female protesters were also detained and tortured, she adds.

Fearful for her life, Rahmani has moved between relatives’ homes in recent weeks, bringing with her only a few items of clothing each time. “Activists cannot sleep soundly,” she says.

After spending the past month in hiding with her husband and three children, terrified that the Taliban would harm them, Mina and her family are trying to flee to a neighbouring country. She hopes to provide support to those still protesting. “I am trying to help the women and girls who are scared, depressed and anxious. Some are thinking about suicide.”

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HEADLINE	11/04 FBI tapes: ‘The Base’ plotting terror attacks
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/newly-released-fbi-tapes-show-white-supremacist-members/story?id=80975917
GIST	<p>For a month, FBI agents listened in as two members of a white supremacist group discussed their sinister plans: a plot to use a pro-gun rights rally in Richmond, Virginia, to engage in mass murder and attacks on critical infrastructure, which they believed would mark the start of a racial civil war.</p> <p>Patrik Mathews, a former Canadian Army reservist illegally in the U.S., and Brian Lemley, a Maryland resident and self-described white nationalist, fantasized about the brutal murders they’d soon carry out against law enforcement and Black people, all with the goal of bringing about the “Boogaloo,” or the collapse of the U.S. government in order to prop up a white ethno-state, according to recordings of the pair’s discussions.</p> <p>“We need to go back to the days of ... decimating Blacks and getting rid of them where they stand,” Mathews said in one recording. “If you see a bunch of Blacks sitting on some corner you f***ing shoot them.”</p> <p>“I need to claim my first victim,” Lemley said in another recording. “It’s just that we can’t live with ourselves if we don’t get somebody’s blood on our hands.”</p>

The two men were each sentenced in late October to nine years in prison, and ABC News has now obtained newly released audio from the FBI's secret recording of Mathews and Lemley at their Delaware residence in late 2019.

The tapes offer a chilling look into the private plotting of the two members of "The Base," a white supremacist extremist group that the FBI says has, since 2018, recruited members both in the U.S. and abroad through a combination of online chat rooms, private meetings, and military-style training camps. In their plea agreements and at sentencing, Mathews and Lemley both acknowledged their membership in the group.

After the two men were arrested in January 2020, just days before the Richmond rally was set to take place, law enforcement found tactical gear, 1,500 rounds of ammunition, and packed cases of food and supplies in their residence.

In the course of their investigation they also found that Lemley and Mathews had both attended military-style training camps with other members of The Base, and had built a functioning assault rifle that they tested out at a gun range in Maryland.

The recordings captured by the FBI included Mathews and Lemley discussing potential acts of terror they could carry out around the Richmond rally that would lead authorities and, eventually, the U.S. government, to capitulate to the chaos and bloodshed taking place.

"You wanna create f***ing some instability while the Virginia situation is happening, make other things happen," Mathews said. "Derail some rail lines ... shut down the highways ... shut down the rest of the roads ... kick off the economic collapse of the U.S. within a week after the [Boogaloo] starts."

"I mean, even if we don't win, I would still be satisfied with a defeat of the system ... and whatever was to come in its place would be preferable than what there is now," Lemley said. "And if it's not us, then you know what, we still did what we had to do."

Prior to their sentencing, Mathews and Lemley had pleaded guilty to firearms and immigration violation-related charges. At their Oct. 28 sentencing hearing, U.S. district judge Theodore Chuang went above the sentencing guidelines in applying a terrorism enhancement to each charge, sentencing both men to nine years in federal prison.

FBI Director Christopher Wray testified earlier this year that the number of domestic terrorism investigations into white supremacist individuals and groups has tripled since he joined the bureau in 2017.

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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	11/04 Food prices closer to a record high
SOURCE	https://finance.yahoo.com/news/global-food-prices-getting-closer-090000591.html
GIST	<p>(Bloomberg) -- Global food costs jumped last month, extending a march toward a record and piling more inflationary pressure on consumers and governments.</p> <p>A United Nations index tracking staples from wheat to vegetable oils climbed 3% to a fresh decade high in October, threatening even higher grocery bills for households that have already been strained by the pandemic. That could also add to central banks' inflation worries and risks worsening global hunger that's at a multiyear high.</p>

Bad weather hit harvests around the world this year, freight costs soared and labor shortages have roiled the food supply chain from farms to supermarkets. An energy crisis has also proved a headache, forcing vegetable greenhouses to go dark and causing a knock-on risk of bigger fertilizer bills for farmers.

“The issue with the inputs and fertilizers and its implications for next year’s crop is a concern,” said Abdolreza Abbassian, a senior economist at the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization. “By now, the market has factored in most of the supply and demand issues. But the market has by no means factored in next year’s prospects in production.”

Some regions will likely continue to face food-security challenges. The UN on Thursday raised its outlook for global wheat trade to a record as purchases climb in Middle Eastern nations from Iran to Afghanistan. Droughts there slashed crops, boosting dependency on imported grain at a time when prices are soaring.

“This came at the worst time for those countries because world prices are just so high,” Abbassian said. “We cannot afford a bad year in 2022 for important crops.”

The price gains are stirring memories of spikes in 2008 and 2011 that contributed to global food crises. While it takes time for commodity costs to trickle to grocery shelves, officials in areas like North Africa and Turkey are already facing difficulties shielding shoppers from the blow.

Bigger expenses for farmers could also curb Northern Hemisphere plantings now underway, according to the FAO.

October’s food-price gains were mostly driven by higher costs for grains and vegetable oils, the FAO said in a report.

Still, there are signs of stabilizing prices for some foods, with meat and sugar falling last month, Abbassian said. Global grain and oilseed supplies are proving sufficient to meet demand, and prices for rice -- one of the world’s vital staples -- remain subdued, he said.

“On the demand side, we’re beginning to get a better hold of what we actually need, so that uncertainty is perhaps diminishing,” he said.

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HEADLINE	11/03 Drone plot against electrical grid
SOURCE	https://wjla.com/news/nation-world/watch-intelligence-bulletin-reveals-plot-against-pennsylvania-electrical-grid
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON (ABC News) — A new warning has been issued regarding a potential attack on the electrical grid in the northeast United States. A newly-released intelligence bulletin, obtained by ABC News, reveals a plot involving the use of a drone to disrupt an electrical grid in Pennsylvania in July 2020.</p> <p>The drone, which crashed atop a building near a Pennsylvania power substation last year, was likely intended to disrupt operations by creating a short circuit to damage transformers, according to the memo from the FBI, Department of Homeland Security and the National Counterterrorism Center. The drone had a thick copper wire attached to it.</p> <p>The memo was based on a review of drone incidents dating back to 2017.</p> <p>A concern is the illicit use of drones over energy infrastructure and other potential targets are growing. Drones are very difficult to detect or even to defend against.</p> <p>Officials believe it's the first time a drone was used to deliberately damage the U.S. energy structure.</p> <p>The person responsible removed the camera, memory card, and all markings to hide their identity.</p>

	Federal officials tell CNN they are distributing the intelligence bulletin now to "raise awareness about the incident and the general threat of drones to critical infrastructure."
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HEADLINE	11/04 Great Lakes warming at feverish pace
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/weather/2021/11/04/great-lakes-fastest-warming-study/
GIST	<p>Since October, the water temperatures on all five of the Great Lakes have hovered at record-high autumn levels, about five to six degrees above average. This comes after abnormally large spikes in temperature over the summer, as well.</p> <p>The record-warm water temperatures over the Great Lakes fit into a pattern of warming lakes all over the planet, forced upward as human-caused climate change pushes air temperatures to record highs.</p> <p>"I'm not surprised at all that the water temperatures are so warm," said Sapna Sharma, an associate professor at York University who has studied ice for more than a decade. "Lakes are experiencing more extreme warm years."</p> <p>Sharma and her colleagues analyzed 60 lakes in the Northern Hemisphere in a September study and found a pronounced warming trend over the past 100 to 200 years. The lakes have warmed six times as fast in the past 25 years compared with any other period in the past century. Previous work shows lake warming trends extend to the Southern Hemisphere.</p> <p>The warmer water temperatures are pushing the onset of ice to later in the year, as well as ending the ice season earlier. The study found that on average, lakes are losing about 17 days of ice cover per century. The lakes were freezing about 11 days later and thawing about seven days earlier.</p> <p>Sharma says the cause is a sharp increase in abnormally warm weather. Since 1995, several lakes have begun to experience winters with minimal or no ice cover.</p> <p>"If we continue at this same rate, over the next 75 years we'll lose 106 more days of ice cover on average across our lakes," said co-author Dave Richardson, a professor at the State University of New York at New Paltz. "That is losing the entire ice period for many of these lakes over the next hundred years."</p> <p>The study examined lakes with consistent ice-cover observations from 107 to 204 years old. The longest observations, which dated to 1443, were recorded by Shinto priests for Lake Suwa in Japan. The priests logged the date the lake froze to anticipate the timing of a religious parable. The Shinto priests believed their male and female deities lived on opposite sides of the lake. When the water froze, the male could cross the lake to visit the female deity. The priests also tried to use the timing to forecast rice crops.</p> <p>On other lakes, people recorded the timing of lake freeze to determine when ice could be harvested for refrigeration during the summer or when trappers would return from catching beavers all winter.</p> <p>"The earliest observers that wrote these down were not scientists. Ice was important for the way of life and living and killing whales and fishing in the wintertime," said John J. Magnuson, a limnologist the University of Wisconsin at Madison. "The longer records all began before there was a science, and the science is capitalizing on what's occurred."</p> <p>Today, researchers study ice cover to help track the health of the ecosystem. Less ice cover means more lake water can evaporate, reducing the amount of freshwater available to aquatic organisms and people. Less ice also allows the surface of the lake to warm earlier and more intensely, resulting in more algal blooms that can sometimes contaminate the water for humans. Changes in ice cover also have an economic effect on those who use the lake for fishing, sports and transportation for goods.</p>

“You lose a lot of those goods and services that you might otherwise have, even before you lose the ice in its entirety,” Richardson said. He said these simple long-term measurements have “been a really valuable piece of understanding how climate change works.”

The Great Lakes, which supply water for more than 30 million people, were among the fastest-warming lakes in the study. Lake Superior was the fastest, losing nearly two months of ice cover per century. Lake Michigan also experienced rapid warming and more ice-free years.

Lake Superior is warming up three times as fast as the global average, which is around 0.61 degrees (0.34 Celsius) per decade.

Sharma said Lake Superior’s summer water temperatures were warming at the world’s second-fastest rate, referring to her previous research. “It probably is linked to this less ice cover,” she said.

Sharma said lower ice cover in the winter leads to warmer water in the summer as the surface of the lake intercepts the sun’s energy sooner. Last winter’s maximum ice cover was 7.5 percent lower than the long-term average over the Great Lakes.

Abnormally warm air temperatures have elevated Great Lakes water temperatures since the summer. October was especially warm, with air temperatures 5 to 10 degrees above long-term averages at land stations surrounding the lakes. Several locations had their warmest Octobers on record.

Because of Lake Superior’s depth, it has a high heat capacity and takes longer than shallower lakes to cool down when its water temperatures are elevated. As of Thursday, Lake Superior’s average water temperature was around 53 degrees — the warmest in early November in more than a quarter-century of records.

Colder air has finally moved into the region, potentially good news for this year’s winter ice cover. While water temperatures are still at record highs, they have cooled about 5 to 10 degrees over the past few weeks. The season’s first lake-effect snows occurred as frosty air swept across the relatively warm lake waters. On Monday and Tuesday, up to 11 inches fell in parts of northern Michigan.

Sharma thinks the Great Lakes will experience near-average ice cover this winter, as the current La Niña pattern favors cold temperatures in the northern United States. But longer-term projections are less optimistic with global warming.

“If we continue emitting greenhouse gases at this rate, Lake Superior will not freeze after the 2060s. Lake Michigan will not freeze after the 2060s,” said Sharma, citing her previous research.

The planet is projected to warm around 4.9 degrees (2.7 Celsius) by the end of the century. At this rate, Sharma and her colleagues calculate that about 5,700 lakes could permanently lose ice cover by 2100.

At the ongoing United Nations COP26 conference in Glasgow, Scotland, nations are negotiating how to limit warming to 2.7 degrees (1.5 Celsius) above preindustrial levels. Sharma said if global temperature changes were below 3.6 degrees (2 Celsius), only 179 lakes would permanently lose ice cover in the next century.

“We find that [for] preserving ice cover, there isn’t a magic solution. The solution is mitigating greenhouse gas emissions,” she said. “It’s not just about the ice. It’s about what will happen to water quality and water quantity. So that’s why COP is so important.”

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HEADLINE	11/04 Spokane Co. sheriff billboards misspelling
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/spokane-county-sheriff-launches-billboard-in-cities-across-us-with-washington-misspelled

GIST	<p>NEW YORK - The Spokane County Sheriff's Office IS running recruitment ads on one of the busiest blocks in the country.</p> <p>The billboards are in New York City's Time Square, they promote a \$15,000 hiring bonus.</p> <p>In a Facebook post, the sheriff's office says it's an effort to recruit qualified, well-trained professionals from quote, "areas where local elected officials have not generally supported them."</p> <p>It goes on to say "we want them to know there is a place where they are wanted and valued."</p> <p>The ads started a two-day run in Times Square, but it is also getting attention for another reason.</p> <p><i>Spokane County Sheriff launches billboard in cities across US with 'Washington' misspelled</i></p> <p>If you look closely, Washington is misspelled, it's missing the "g".</p> <p>The sheriff's office says the ad company is working to correct the typo.</p> <p>Similar billboards are in Seattle, Portland, Denver and Austin.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 Seattle Fire Dept. deputy chief missing
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/yakima-kittitas-counties-searching-for-missing-seattle-fire-deputy-chief
GIST	<p>YAKIMA, Wash. – A Settle Fire Department deputy chief is missing.</p> <p>The Yakima County Sheriff's Office confirmed to KOMO News Thursday it is searching for Jay Schreckengost.</p> <p>KOMO News was told he was staying at a cabin on a nearby resort. His son was supposed to show up but deputies say they don't know if he has.</p> <p>Schreckengost's vehicle was actually found in Kittitas County, both counties are working together on the search.</p> <p>YCSO said Schreckengost has not made contact with anyone he was supposed to.</p>
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	11/05 Scrutiny: nearly all-white jury Arbery case
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/04/us/ahmaud-arbery-killing-trial-jury.html
GIST	<p>BRUNSWICK, Ga. — Even as he approved the selection of a nearly all-white jury this week to hear the murder case against three white men accused of killing Ahmaud Arbery, a Georgia judge declared that there was an appearance of “intentional discrimination” at play.</p> <p>But Judge Timothy R. Walmsley of Glynn County Superior Court also said that defense lawyers had presented legitimate reasons unrelated to race to justify unseating eight Black potential jurors. And that, he said, was enough for him to reject the prosecution's effort to reseat them.</p> <p>What may have seemed like convoluted logic to non-lawyers was actually the judge's scrupulous adherence to a 35-year-old Supreme Court decision that was meant to remove racial bias from the jury selection process — but has come to be considered a failure by many legal scholars.</p>

The guidelines established by that ruling were central to the intense legal fight that erupted in court late Wednesday over the racial composition of the jury in the trial of the three defendants, which is set to begin on Friday. The argument raised fundamental questions about what it means to be a fair and impartial juror, particularly in a high-profile trial unfolding in a small, interconnected community where nearly everyone has opinions about the case.

Defense lawyers told Judge Walmsley there were important, race-neutral reasons to unseat several Black candidates for the jury. One man, they said, had played high school football with Mr. Arbery. Another told lawyers that “this whole case is about racism.”

But the fact that the jury will be composed of 11 white people and one Black person in a Deep South trial over the killing of a Black man has profoundly dismayed some local residents who already had concerns about whether the trial will be fair.

“This jury is like a black eye to those of us who have been here for generations, whose ancestors labored and toiled and set a foundation for this community,” said Delores Polite, a community activist and distant relative of Mr. Arbery, who was fatally shot last year after being chased by three men who suspected him of a series of break-ins.

More broadly, the racially lopsided jury, in a county that is about 27 percent Black and 64 percent white, underscores the enduring challenges that American courts face in applying what seems to be a simple constitutional principle: that equal justice “requires a criminal trial free of racial discrimination in the jury selection process,” as Justice Brett M. Kavanaugh [put it in a ruling from 2019](#).

At the heart of the matter in the Georgia case, and many others like it where white people dominate the jury box, is the ability of lawyers to issue a limited number of peremptory challenges — which usually require no explanation — to strike potential jurors from the process. Lawyers typically have wide discretion, but in a landmark 1986 case, *Batson v. Kentucky*, the Supreme Court ruled that lawyers could not discriminate on the basis of race in issuing the challenges.

Since then, lawyers who suspect the other side of unseating a juror on racial grounds can contest it, a move often called a “Batson challenge.”

That is what unfolded for almost two hours on Wednesday at the Glynn County Courthouse, as defense lawyers walked Judge Walmsley through the detailed reasons they believed that each of the eight Black residents should not be seated, such as the pro-Arbery hashtags that some potential jurors had posted online or the negative opinions they had formed about the three defendants — Gregory McMichael, 65; his son Travis McMichael, 35; and their neighbor William Bryan, 52.

Laura D. Hogue, one of the lawyers for the elder Mr. McMichael, described peremptory strikes as an important tool that allowed lawyers “to weed out the worst of the worst,” by which she meant people who seemed to be irredeemably biased.

The lead prosecutor, Linda Dunikoski, pushed back in every case. She argued that a number of potential jurors were honest with lawyers about their knowledge and opinions about the case, but were then unseated by the defense on the basis of those opinions — even when they stated that they could be impartial if seated.

Ms. Dunikoski also noted that the 12-person jury had been selected from a panel that included 12 Black people and 36 white people — and yet, she said, “the actual jury that was selected has only one African American male on it.” The prosecution used all 12 of its peremptory strikes on white potential jurors.

Judge Walmsley spoke like a man whose hands were tied by the law. “I’ll tell you,” he said at one point, “in this case, Batson’s limitations, I think, are clearly out there.”

Outside the courthouse on Thursday, activists argued that the process was essentially broken.

“This is not race neutral,” said Barbara Arnwine, a lawyer and member of a group called the Transformative Justice Coalition. “This was racial targeting of Black jurors. It was disingenuous to lie and pretend this was about anything other than getting rid of Black jurors.”

The case against the men accused of killing Mr. Arbery is a rare one in which a prosecutor issues Batson challenges; they are more typically issued by defense lawyers trying to prevent prosecutors from booting minorities out of the jury selection process. A number of studies have focused on prosecutors, finding that they have removed Black jurors at double or triple the rates of other people in states like Alabama, Louisiana and North Carolina.

The efficacy of Batson as a tool to remove racial bias in the jury selection process has come under serious criticism in recent years by legal scholars. In a California Law Review article last year, the lawyer Annie Sloan argued that Batson was now “widely considered to be a toothless and inadequate decision that fails to reduce the unfair exclusion of jurors of color.”

Ms. Sloan noted that Batson challenges were rarely successful, in part because it was too easy for lawyers to come up with a race-neutral justification for their strike. And she argued that Batson did not take into account implicit bias, meaning that lawyers might strike jurors for racial reasons without even realizing it.

Ms. Sloan pointed to what she deemed a hopeful modification of Batson by Washington State, where a 2018 State Supreme Court rule forbids peremptory challenges if an “objective observer” deems jurors’ race or ethnicity to be a factor in unseating them.

California adopted a similar approach in 2020. Arizona will ban the use of peremptory strikes starting Jan. 1.

Some legal scholars critical of Batson believe that peremptory strikes still have their place, serving as an important check against biased jurors. Stephen B. Bright, a professor at Yale Law School and Georgetown Law, said he favored limiting the number of peremptory strikes to three per side.

In Brunswick on Wednesday, Judge Walmsley mentioned Washington as one of the states “that’s looked at Batson and recognized the limitations it places on the court.” In Georgia, he noted that all that lawyers need to overcome a Batson challenge is to deliver an explanation that is “legitimate, nondiscriminatory, clear, reasonably specific and related” to the case.

The concern now in Brunswick is that faith in the justice system has been undermined by the selection of a racially imbalanced jury.

Charlie Bailey, a former senior assistant district attorney in Fulton County, Ga., recognized the constraints that the law placed on the judge. Still, he described the jury composition as fundamentally unfair to the community, and to Mr. Arbery’s family.

“Eleven of 12 is 11 of 12,” said Mr. Bailey, a Democrat who is running for Georgia attorney general. “It’s hard for me to believe — and I think it’s hard for most people to believe — that 11 of 12 did not have anything to do with race.”

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HEADLINE	11/04 Migrant Oregon weed workers face threats
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/marijuana/migrant-workers-living-in-squalid-conditions-facing-threats-on-illegal-oregon-marijuana-farms/
GIST	SALEM, Ore. (AP) — Thousands of immigrants working on southern Oregon illegal marijuana farms that authorities say are run by foreign cartels are living in squalid conditions and are sometimes being cheated and threatened by their gangland bosses.

The situation has gotten so bad in the largely rural region near the state line with California, amid a violent crime surge and water theft for the growing operations during a severe drought, that Jackson and Douglas counties declared a state of emergency last month.

They requested state funding and other resources, including deployment of the National Guard, to properly enforce cannabis laws.

On Thursday, commissioners in neighboring Josephine County said they are preparing their own emergency declaration. A draft document cites “rampant violations of county codes, state water laws and criminal laws.” They previously wrote a letter to Oregon’s senate president saying the county is experiencing “a tragic surge in narco-slavery.”

A spokeswoman for Democratic Gov. Kate Brown, Elizabeth Merah, has said that there are no immediate plans to deploy the National Guard.

Many of the zone’s illegal marijuana farms operate under the guise of being legal hemp farms, but the crops that they grow have amounts of THC — the component that gives pot its high — far above the legal levels allowed for hemp.

State regulators and local law enforcement officers have been overwhelmed by the amount of industrial-scale growing sites, which they say number in the hundreds and possibly thousands.

There aren’t enough inspectors to test for THC content at each site to determine which ones are legal and which are not, officials have said. Some sites, frequently with armed guards, have refused entry to state inspectors. Police have said they do not have the capacity to raid all the suspicious sites because each raid requires an investigation and search warrants.

And some managers of the illegal operations are refusing to pay workers and have threatened them with violence if they go to the authorities or try to quit, according to law enforcement officials and a group that advocates for the migrant and farm worker rights.

“We’ve had several cases in Josephine County, where they were threatened with guns to their heads, ‘If you guys tell anybody, we’re going to harm your family in Mexico,’ or ‘We’re going to shoot you,’” said Kathy Keesee-Morales, co-director of Unete, an immigrant and farmworker advocacy group based in Medford, Oregon.

Some of workers who say they were cheated have contacted Unete, which has tried to help by calling the pot-farm managers and warning them that they could face complaints filed with the Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industry if they don’t pay the workers what they are owed, Keesee-Morales said.

“Many times they’ll just pay them because they don’t want any kind of interaction with the state,” Keesee-Morales said.

The number of illegal marijuana farms in the region, which are not part of Oregon’s legal and regulated marijuana system, surged this year, with some even emerging alongside state highways.

They produce tons of marijuana that is sold outside the state. Officials believe the cartels selected southern Oregon because it’s considered part of the the fabled marijuana-growing Emerald Triangle, a zone in which California’s Humboldt, Mendocino and Trinity counties form the major part.

The region produces top-quality weed that is “the microbrew of cannabis,” said state Rep. Lily Morgan, a Republican from the small city of Grants Pass, the county seat of Josephine County.

“You can ask a high dollar around the world for it,” she said.

Local landowners often rent or sell their property to the illegal growers at prices much higher than normal rates. In one case, an owner went to her land to negotiate a lease renewal and discovered that the manager of the illegal marijuana farm was gone — and had left the growing equipment and workers behind.

Morgan said the owner told county officials: “These people have been left, there are workers who have no I.D., they do not speak English, they have no food.”

Oregon’s labor bureau is investigating wage complaints from workers at illegal marijuana farms, said Sonia Ramirez, administrator of the bureau’s wage and hour division.

Workers have had to use holes in the ground for toilets, bathe with makeshift showers, cook in unsanitary kitchens and live in tents and sleep on cots in shipping containers and in marijuana greenhouses, said Jackson County Sheriff Nathan Sickler.

Sickler said his deputies do not arrest the workers on alleged immigration violations and instead hand out cards, in Spanish, provided by Unete that list agencies that provide free services for migrants.

The workers are reluctant to talk to law enforcement officials because they are terrified that cartel enforcers might discover that they have done so and harm them or their relatives living elsewhere, Sickler and Keesee-Morales said.

“There is a fear factor,” the sheriff said. “These individuals know that they could be at risk for talking to the police about several things, including the conditions, the lack of being paid.”

While colder weather now coming to Oregon spells the end of the growing season for many of the marijuana growing sites, indoor illegal operations continue operating through the winter because they are outfitted with heat lamps that allow pot plants to grow.

Sickler doesn’t expect a letup of the criminal activity because a lot of cash is involved, creating a tempting target for robbers.

In raids conducted by Sickler’s deputies on one day in September on two pot farms, officers found \$650,000, 7.5 tons of processed marijuana and 20,000 pot plants.

Last month, men with guns tried to rob an illegal marijuana growing site and processing facility in the small Jackson County city of Eagle Point. Three men from Sacramento, California were arrested on charges of robbery, unlawful use of a weapon and assault.

Josephine County Sheriff Dave Daniel predicted no immediate resolution to the problem of illegal marijuana farms.

“This summer was absolutely out of control,” he said. “We’re anticipating next year being just as bad, if not worse.”

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HEADLINE	11/04 Portland mayor seeks more funds for police
SOURCE	https://news.yahoo.com/just-one-defund-police-cuts-145819523.html
GIST	<p>A year after Portland cut funds to its police department amid defund the police protests, Mayor Ted Wheeler announced Wednesday he is seeking more than \$5 million this fall for police investments, including hiring more officers and buying body-worn cameras.</p> <p>"Many Portlanders no longer feel safe in their city," Wheeler said during a news conference Wednesday. "Business owners have closed up shop, for fear of doing business in high risk areas. Commuters fear for their safety, whether taking public transport or going by foot. Parents are scared to let their children play outside."</p>

Portland has seen its most violent year, with a record number of 72 homicides, surpassing its previous full-year record of 66 in 1987. Nationally, homicides increased by nearly 30% from 2019 to 2020, based on FBI data. In Portland, deadly violence increased at a faster rate than nearly all major cities, with an 83% increase in homicides in 2020.

Starting in the fiscal year 2023, Wheeler said he wants to increase the police bureau's staffing numbers by 300 officers — 200 sworn officers and 100 unarmed public safety specialists — over the next three years. To attract more officers to the force, Wheeler is proposing \$25,000 signing bonuses to the first 50 officers or public safety specialists. He is also supporting hiring back 25 retired police officers.

"Our police bureau staffing levels are at record lows and based on projected retirements, staffing levels will continue (to decrease) unless we take decisive action now," Wheeler said.

Since August 2020, about 200 officers have left the department. Many, in their exit interviews, cited low morale, lack of support from city officials and burnout from months of racial justice protests, which often ended in plumes of tear gas before largely dying down last fall.

Currently, the Portland Police Department is around 130 officers below its authorized strength.

As Portland has reached more than 1,000 shootings this year, some residents, bystanders injured by gunfire and city leaders say the police are struggling to keep the city safe. Portland also saw repeated riots in the summer of 2020 following the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis while he was in police custody, which reignited calls to defund the police and led to national protests.

Nationally, there was a 45% increase in the retirement rate and a nearly 20% increase in resignations from officers in 2020-2021 compared to the previous year, according to a June survey from the [Police Executive Research Forum](#).

Smaller police departments across the country have suffered with staffing issues in the past year after larger cities such as New York City, [Seattle](#) and [Los Angeles](#) cut funds to police departments. The staffing shortages are currently being complicated by vaccine mandates implemented in cities, which have caused some officers to leave their positions or be fired for not complying.

Wheeler's announcement comes after defund the police candidates lost in elections across the country this week.

[Seattle and New York City](#) both had mayoral elections on Tuesday, with Seattle showing a strong lead for pro-police candidate Bruce Harrell, and New York City electing Democrat and former police captain, Eric Adams. While voters in [Minneapolis](#) rejected a proposed amendment to the city's charter that would have replaced the Minneapolis Police Department with a Department of Public Safety.

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HEADLINE	11/04 King Co. ME: jail death from natural causes
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/crime/man-died-from-natural-causes-in-king-county-jail-medical-examiner-determines/
GIST	<p>A 66-year-old man, who had been in custody in the King County Jail since July, died at the jail Wednesday evening, according to the King County Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention.</p> <p>The King County Medical Examiner's Office identified the man Thursday as Billy Sterling and determined he died from pulmonary emphysema and metastatic prostate cancer. His death was ruled to be from natural causes.</p> <p>Sterling, of Kent, was facing two counts of promoting the commercial sex abuse of a minor, accused of profiting from the prostitution of two 17-year-old girls from March until his July arrest, according to court records. At the time, he was under a five-year court order to not have any contact with minors following an</p>

	<p>earlier conviction for promoting the prostitution of another juvenile girl, the records say. In August, he made recorded phone calls from the jail to a girl in California, encouraging her to come live with him, according to the records.</p> <p>In October, a superior court judge denied a defense motion to reduce Sterling's \$200,000 bail and Jail Health Services indicated they were providing Sterling with palliative care, according to court records. Sterling's in-custody death is the second in less than three weeks.</p> <p>On Oct. 17, Dustin Rand, 48, was found unresponsive in his cell at the jail in downtown Seattle and later died at Harborview Medical Center. As of Thursday, his cause and manner of death were still pending the results of toxicology testing, according to the Medical Examiner's Office. He was awaiting trial on a third-degree assault charge.</p> <p>Noah Haglund, a spokesperson for the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention, said jail officials are working with Public Health – Seattle & King County to conduct internal investigations into the deaths of Sterling and Rand and the Seattle Police Department is also conducting its own investigation into the deaths.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 Threat forces evacuation Seattle school
SOURCE	https://www.capitolhillseattle.com/2021/11/threat-forces-evacuation-at-garfield-high-school/
GIST	<p>Students at Garfield High School were evacuated from classrooms Thursday after a threat made against the school, a Seattle Public Schools spokesperson tells CHS.</p> <p>The evacuation order came around noon with school officials going class by class to order students to assemble on the nearby sports field while Seattle Police searched the 23rd Ave campus. Reports from students described police search dogs on the school ground.</p> <p>SPD referred any questions about the situation to the school district.</p> <p>After a long period in the rain, students were being released and the campus closed for the day. According to parents and those at the scene, students were told to leave campus and not go near the school where the police activity continued.</p> <p>UPDATE: Parents report the campus reopened later in the afternoon so kids could collect belongings. SPD reports that nothing turned up in the search.</p> <p><i>On 11/04/2021 at 1157 hours, someone called in an anonymous bomb threat to a school from an unknown number. Based on the threat the school was evacuated and police were called. Patrol responded, secured the scene and arson bomb squad detectives searched for possible explosive devices. No suspicious items were found.</i></p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 'I did nothing wrong' woman jailed 2mo.
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/legal-issues/jenna-ryan-jail-capitol-jan-6/2021/11/04/c94cd8c2-3d82-11ec-8ee9-4f14a26749d1_story.html
GIST	<p>A Texas real estate agent who bragged after Jan. 6 that as a blonde White woman she would not be going to jail for joining in the assault on the U.S. Capitol by a pro-Trump mob was sentenced Thursday to two months of incarceration.</p> <p>It was one of the harshest penalties imposed to date on a participant in events at the Capitol who was found guilty only of a petty offense.</p> <p>"For better or worse, you've become one of the faces of January 6," U.S. District Judge Christopher R. Cooper of D.C. told Jenna Ryan, 50. She gained national attention by defending her conduct at the</p>

Capitol in media interviews and on Twitter. Because of that notoriety, Cooper said, people would look to her sentence as evidence of “how our country responded to what happened.”

He continued, “I think the sentence should tell them that we take it seriously, that it was an assault on our democracy . . . and that it should never happen again.”

In sentencing Ryan to 60 days in custody, he cited her apparent lack of remorse for her conduct, as well as her decision to join the mob, not directly from President Donald Trump’s rally that morning but after going back to her hotel and seeing television footage of a mob besieging the Capitol.

Ryan pleaded guilty in August to one count of parading, demonstrating or picketing in the Capitol.

“You’ve been very upfront that you feel no sense of shame or guilt,” Cooper said. “You suggested antifa was somehow involved. And perhaps most famously, you said that because you had blonde hair and white skin, you wouldn’t be going to jail.”

He was referring to a tweet Ryan [posted](#) in March saying, “Sorry I have blonde hair white skin a great job a great future and I’m not going to jail. . . . I did nothing wrong.”

In a letter to the court, Ryan said that at the time she “was trying to maintain my dignity to a mob of haters who were harassing me relentlessly by social media, phone and email,” and that conversations with her lawyer led her to believe, mistakenly, that she would receive a probationary sentence.

“I do not feel that I am immune to punishment due to my appearance and social status,” she said. “My true feelings are not always displayed on my public social network. Much of my inner world is kept inside.”

Ryan is being allowed to report in January to serve her sentence.

Leaving court, she told WUSA9 that the message she learned was that “if you tweet, you can go to jail.”

In earlier media interviews and tweets, Ryan called the prosecutions a “witch hunt” and said she “did something noble” while suggesting any violence was committed by antifascists or the FBI.

In court, she said, “I made a mistake and I’m sorry.”

She emphasized that she had been in the building for only a few minutes and said she did not engage in any violence. She also said she did not see any violent behavior.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Karen Rochlin called that assertion misleading and self-serving, however, citing Ryan’s social media posts from that day.

Ryan recorded herself saying she was “going to war” and ready to “storm the Capitol.” She left the building quickly only because she could not stand the tear gas, Rochlin said, and then continued to film others going inside as they shouted, “We will fight to the death!” and “Hang Mike Pence!”

“Even after her own exit, she seems to be encouraging, promoting, endorsing, if you will, the effort of the crowd to push its way in, to force its way in,” Rochlin said. “Even if she did not anticipate such violence, she celebrated it, she broadcast it.”

Cooper agreed.

“It’s clear that you knew this was no ordinary peaceful protest,” he said. “You joined a large group of people who were intent on, in your own words, storming the Capitol.”

HEADLINE	11/04 FAA refers 37 unruly travelers cases to FBI
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/transportation/2021/11/04/faa-refers-unruly-passengers-fbi/
GIST	<p>The Federal Aviation Administration announced Thursday that it has referred the cases of more than three dozen unruly passengers to the FBI for potential criminal prosecution in hopes of curbing a sharp uptick in people acting violently on planes this year.</p> <p>“Let this serve both as a warning and a deterrent: If you disrupt a flight, you risk not just fines from the FAA but federal criminal prosecution as well,” FAA Administrator Stephen Dickson said Thursday in a news release.</p> <p>In August, the FAA and the Justice Department began developing an information-sharing protocol to refer the most serious cases to the FBI for further review and faster prosecution, the agencies said in a joint statement.</p> <p>The step comes as U.S. airlines grapple with an increase in disruptive or violent incidents on board flights — many involving hostile passengers protesting mask mandates as travel goes back to pre-pandemic levels.</p> <p>The FAA initiated a “zero tolerance” policy at the beginning of the year in response to what it described as a rapid rise in the number of passengers disrupting flights with threatening — or, in many cases, violent — behavior. Previously, unruly passengers would receive a warning or training for their misconduct. They could also be hit with a civil penalty of up to \$25,000 per incident. Now, all incidents are subject to a fine of up to \$37,000 for each federal violation.</p> <p>The FAA reported 5,033 incidents of unruly passengers as of November during this year, 3,642 of which were related to mask-wearing. From the total number of incidents, the FAA initiated 950 investigations, a sixfold increase from last year.</p> <p>The agency initiated enforcement action in 227 cases, some of which will lead to a civil penalty. Of the 227, 37 of the most egregious cases of disruptive or violent passenger behavior were referred to the FBI for possible criminal prosecution.</p> <p>The Justice Department and the FBI said in a statement that they are “committed to prioritizing the review of the cases referred by the FAA and initiating criminal prosecution where appropriate.”</p> <p>On Thursday, the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, which represents nearly 50,000 flight attendants at 17 airlines, applauded the FAA’s and the Justice Department’s decision.</p> <p>“Expediently referring the most violent, physical assaults against crewmembers and passengers to the Department of Justice for public prosecution is the most effective way to deter bad actors and put a stop to the spike in disruptive passengers,” Sara Nelson, president of AFA-CWA International, said in a news release.</p> <p>In recent weeks, the association has repeatedly urged federal authorities as well as airlines and airports to ramp up efforts to hold disruptive passengers accountable and to create a centralized list of violators who will be denied permission to fly on all airlines.</p> <p>Currently, there is no such list, but individual companies have the right to keep internal lists of people banned from boarding their planes.</p> <p>“If a passenger physically assaults crewmembers or other passengers on one airline, they pose a risk to passengers and crew at every airline. They should be banned from flying on all airlines. Period,” Nelson said in the statement.</p>

A national survey of almost 5,000 flight attendants released by the union found that 85 percent of them had dealt with unruly passengers and nearly 1 in 5 had experienced physical incidents in 2021.

The outrage over unruly behavior on flights surfaced again last week when an American Airlines flight attendant was hospitalized with several broken face bones after a passenger assaulted her midflight.

The California-bound airplane was diverted and forced to land in Denver, in what American Airlines CEO Doug Parker called “one the worst attacks” in the company’s history.

Parker also said on social media that the man accused of the assault will be banned from flying on the airline again and that the company was trying to ensure that the passenger was prosecuted “to the fullest extent possible.”

On Monday, the Justice Department announced that the man has been charged with interference with a flight crew and assault within the U.S. special aircraft jurisdiction.

Reacting to the news of the assault, Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said Sunday that a federal no-fly list of violent airplane passengers “should be on the table,” given the severity and frequency of such incidents.

“It is completely unacceptable to mistreat, abuse or even disrespect flight crews,” Buttigieg told CNN. “We will continue to look at all options to make sure that flight crews and passengers are safe.”

The mounting number of incidents has also drawn rebuke from the White House. In September, President Biden lambasted travelers who harass or attack flight attendants while refusing to wear a face mask.

He also announced a doubling of fines for those who don’t comply with the federal transportation mask mandate: a minimum penalty of \$500 for first-time offenders and \$3,000 for those caught doing so a second time.

“If you break the rules, be prepared to pay,” Biden said, speaking from the White House. “And by the way, show some respect. The anger you see on television toward flight attendants and others doing their job is wrong. It’s ugly.”

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HEADLINE	11/04 Gunmen battle near Mexico luxury hotel
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/04/cancun-tourists-luxury-hotel-gunmen-reports
GIST	<p>Staff and tourists near the Mexican resort city of Cancún have been sent rushing for shelter after a group of armed men entered the beach outside a luxury hotel and opened fire.</p> <p>Two men were killed on Thursday in what state officials described as a confrontation between drug dealers at the Hyatt Ziva in Puerto Morelos, just south of Cancún.</p> <p>“No tourists were seriously hurt or kidnapped,” said the security secretariat for the surrounding Quintana Roo state on Twitter.</p> <p>About 15 assailants, who were reportedly armed with “long guns”, stormed into the beach area, killing a presumed drug dealer, according to local news reports. At least one unidentified person was injured after being struck with the butt of a weapon.</p> <p>The newspaper Reforma quoted a police report describing “a second drug dealer,” who tried to hide in a hotel room but was shot dead.</p> <p>The Quintana Roo state prosecutor’s office blamed the incident on a “confrontation” between drug dealing gangs, which claimed two lives.</p>

“There were no serious injuries,” [the office said](#) in a tweet.

A person who answered the phone at the hotel said she was unaware of any incidents at the site. A Hyatt spokesperson said in an email: “We understand the hotel team immediately engaged local authorities, who are on the scene investigating the situation.”

The incident sparked terror among hotel guests.

“Men with guns stormed the beach and started shooting,” tweeted Andrew Krop, a guest at the hotel. “Please spread the word and get help on this. I have no idea what to do.”

Mike Sington, a retired Hollywood executive who was also staying at the hotel [tweeted](#): “All guests and employees were told to duck and we’re being taken to hiding places.”

He confirmed in a DM to the Guardian he was “hiding in a dark room”. He later tweeted that emotionally shaken guests had come out of hiding.

Some of the guests [shared stories of](#) “playing volleyball on the beach, gunman approached firing gun. Everyone ran from beach and swimming pools.”

The incident comes two weeks after [a Californian travel blogger and a German tourist were killed](#) at a restaurant in the nearby beach resort of Tulum during a shootout between suspected gang members. “It was only the latest in a series of attacks in Tulum’s tourist zone,” said Vicente Carrera, publisher of news site Noticaribe.

Cancún and the Mayan Riviera, which unfolds to the south, attract millions of tourists annually and area major source of foreign income for [Mexico](#).

But the region has been plagued by violence as drug cartels dispute territories and run extortion rackets. Police have carried out operations targeting drug dealing on Cancún’s beaches, Carrera said, while at least seven drug cartels are thought to be disputing crime territories in Quintana Roo state.

“We’re seeing a bunch of groups wanting to occupy territories and it seems like there’s no agreement among them,” Carrera said. “The same people dealing drugs are now working extortion rackets,” he added.

Tourists – who have continued to flock to the region throughout the pandemic – represent a substantial local market for drug dealers, and thanks to their strategic locations and transitory populations, Mexico’s tourist destinations have also been prime territory for the country’s criminal groups.

Meanwhile, the government’s strategy of targeting “kingpins” has exacerbated the conflict, as crime groups fracture into rival factions competing for territory and trade.

In Cancún, at least four cartels are thought to be contesting routes to smuggle cocaine in from South America and a local drug market targeting tourists and locals.

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HEADLINE	11/04 Canada military sexual assault cases
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/04/world/canada/canada-military-sexual-assault.html
GIST	<p>OTTAWA — The Canadian military will turn over investigations and prosecutions of sexual misconduct cases to the civilian police and courts, the country’s new defense minister announced Thursday.</p> <p>The announcement came from Anita Anand, a former law professor whose appointment as defense minister last week was widely seen as part of an attempt by the government to get a handle on the sexual assault problem in the military. It grew out of a recommendation from a retired Supreme Court of Canada</p>

justice who was asked in April to review the military's handling of sexual assault and sexual misconduct cases.

The move came in the midst of a crisis for Canada's armed forces.

Since February, 11 of its leaders in positions up to the highest rank have come under investigation, been pushed out of their roles or been forced to retire. Other senior military officers have been put on leave over their mishandling of sexual misconduct investigations.

Current and former servicewomen have spoken out about what they describe as a military culture that both enables and covers up inappropriate sexual behavior by senior officers.

Gen. Jonathan Vance, the former chief of the Canadian Forces defense staff who retired in January, was charged by the military police in July with one count of obstruction of justice following an investigation into allegations of sexual misconduct.

His successor, Adm. Art McDonald, was removed after he, too, became the subject of a sexual misconduct investigation. While an investigation by the military police ultimately concluded that there was not evidence to pursue a court-martial, the government has not returned him to the top post.

"They simply still don't get it," Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said last month about how the military deals with sexual assault and misconduct.

In an interim assessment delivered last month to the previous defense minister, Louise Arbour, the retired Supreme Court justice, said she had already found "significant skepticism among stakeholders, and most importantly survivors, about the independence and competence" of the military police and its special investigation service that looks into serious crimes.

She called this perception "pervasive" within the military and with much of the general public, and said it had "created serious mistrust in the military justice system and, in particular, in the investigative phase."

Ms. Arbour recommended temporarily turning over investigations and prosecutions to civilian police forces, prosecutors and courts while she completes her review.

Ms. Anand, the defense minister, said on Twitter that she had "accepted in full Madame Arbour's recommendations." She also posted a letter she wrote to Ms. Arbour. "The unprecedented scrutiny that the institution is undergoing," Ms. Anand wrote, "represents an equally unprecedented opportunity for meaningful change to build confidence."

The policy directive is the first substantive change to deal with sexual assaults since the military committed in 2019 to improve its complaints process and the government put aside nearly one billion Canadian dollars to settle claims of sexual misconduct.

Stéfanie von Hlatky, the director of the Center for International and Defense Policy at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, said Ms. Anand's decision would be welcomed by many current and former members of the armed forces, even if it is unclear what the ultimate solution will be to the ever-escalating problem.

"There was this pressure certainly on her to take some quick action and set the tone for decisive change in the short term," said Professor van Hlatky, who studies gender issues related to the military. "Since February, a lot of observers, including survivor groups, were growing a little bit impatient with the pace of change."

Carrying out the switch, however, will require considerable negotiation between the federal government and the provinces.

While all criminal laws, including those concerning sexual misconduct, fall under the federal government, the administration of justice is a provincial responsibility. Many provinces also contract much of their policing out to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, a federal force that has come under widespread criticism in the past for its handling of sexual assault and murder cases involving Indigenous women.

Professor van Hlatky said that civilian police forces might also lack sufficient “military literacy” to deal effectively with investigations involving the armed forces.

Ms. Anand’s swift action comes in contrast to attempts in the United States to reform how the United States military handles sexual misconduct cases.

Last summer, President Biden said he wanted the military to remove the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault cases from the control of commanders, the first American president to do so. A panel appointed by Defense Secretary Lloyd J. Austin III has made a similar recommendation, saying that independent judge advocates should take over the role that commanders currently play.

But such a move would require Congressional authorization, and the House and Senate are at odds over some aspects of the needed legislation.

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, Democrat of New York, who has championed such a change for nearly a decade, has been frustrated by both the speed at which the Pentagon wants to move — the panel recommended years of easing into new policies — and the House version of the legislation, which is much more limited in scope from what her bill seeks to reform.

She and scores of other senators are co-sponsoring bipartisan legislation to remove commanders from prosecutorial decisions of all serious crimes, beyond sexual assault, and hand that authority to independent military prosecutors.

It may take until the end of the year to resolve the matter legislatively, and many commanders, especially those in the Marines, remain resistant to change.

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HEADLINE	11/04 Russia analyst in Steele dossier charged
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-analyst-igor-danchenko-arrested-in-connection-with-steele-dossier-11636040274?mod=hp_lead_pos6
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON—A Russia analyst who served as a central source for a dossier of opposition research material on former President Donald Trump has been arrested and charged with lying to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, according to an indictment unsealed in Virginia federal court.</p> <p>Russian-born Igor Danchenko, who was a key source on the material compiled by former British spy Christopher Steele, was taken into custody Thursday as part of special counsel John Durham’s probe into the actions of investigators and intelligence officials during and after the 2016 election campaign. He is expected to make an initial appearance before a judge on Thursday afternoon.</p> <p>Mr. Danchenko has been charged with misleading FBI officials about the sources of the information he helped compile for Mr. Steele. Mr. Danchenko sat for numerous interviews with FBI officials in 2017 as they tried to corroborate allegations made in the reports compiled by Mr. Steele.</p> <p>A lawyer for Mr. Danchenko had no immediate comment on the arrest.</p> <p>The case represents the third prosecution related to the investigation, which began in May 2019 when then-Attorney General William Barr appointed Mr. Durham, then the Connecticut U.S. attorney, to look into matters related to the investigation into Mr. Trump and his campaign associates.</p>

	<p>Mr. Danchenko has previously been identified as Mr. Steele’s “primary sub-source” in compiling a series of private intelligence reports documenting Mr. Trump’s purported ties to Russia. An FBI attorney who prepared a surveillance application as well as an attorney who specializes in cybersecurity have also been indicted by the special counsel’s office on charges of making false statements.</p> <p>Mr. Steele’s research was paid for by the Democratic Party and served as key evidence in a secret surveillance warrant that was obtained against Carter Page, a onetime foreign-policy adviser to Mr. Trump. Many of the dossier’s claims remain unverified. Mr. Trump has denied the allegations in the dossier and said the investigation it helped spark was a “witch hunt.”</p> <p>Mr. Danchenko, born in Russia and trained as a lawyer there, has worked and studied in the U.S. since 2003, according to his LinkedIn profile. He holds masters degrees from Georgetown University and University of Louisville and has worked at the Washington-based Brookings Institution. More recently, he has worked as an independent risk analyst dealing with due-diligence and business-intelligence issues.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 Mexico: biggest seizure pure fentanyl
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/mexico-announces-biggest-seizure-pure-fentanyl-80981422
GIST	<p>MEXICO CITY -- Mexico said Thursday it has made the biggest seizure of pure fentanyl in its history, after five suspected drug traffickers were arrested at a lab along with 260 pounds (118 kilograms) of the synthetic opioid.</p> <p>Fentanyl is 50 times more potent than heroin, and only a tiny amount is needed to make counterfeit oxycodone pills.</p> <p>The Mexican army said the lab busted on Oct. 28 in the northern city of Culiacan probably made about 70 million of the blue fentanyl pills every month for the Sinaloa cartel.</p> <p>“This seizure of pure fentanyl is considered the largest in history,” the Defense Department said in a statement.</p> <p>The lab and the warehouses used to store precursor chemicals used to make fentanyl stretched over five buildings. Most of the chemicals are imported from abroad, usually China or India.</p> <p>The suspected ringleader of the operation and four of his accomplices have been ordered held pending trial.</p> <p>Known as “Mexican oxy,” the counterfeit pills are so poorly manufactured that some contain almost no fentanyl, while others contain a lethal dose.</p> <p>Opioid overdose deaths in the United States reached about 50,000 in 2019, with most of those attributable to synthetic opioids.</p> <p>The Mexican army's seizure of fentanyl and methamphetamines had nose-dived in recent months before the Oct. 28 bust was announced.</p>
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HEADLINE	11/04 Stranger charged in Australia abduction
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/suspect-australian-girls-abduction-charged-80963326
GIST	<p>CANBERRA, Australia -- Cleo Smith was back to her laughing, bubbly self as she played in the backyard of her Australian west coast family home on Thursday, hours before a 36-year-old stranger was charged with abducting the 4-year-old from a camping tent more than two weeks ago.</p> <p>Police charged Terry Kelly, a local resident, with forcibly taking a child among other offenses, a police statement said.</p>

Kelly, referred to in his charge sheet as Terence Darrell Kelly, appeared briefly in court in the town of Carnarvon where a magistrate refused to release him on bail.

Police visited Cleo's family in Carnarvon as they prepared to gather crucial eyewitness evidence involving Kelly, who is suspected of snatching her from a campground north of the town of 5,000 people on Oct. 16.

"I can only see her on the outside, but from that point of view, I'm amazed that she seems to be so well-adjusted and happy, and it was really ... heartwarming to see that she's still bubbly and she's laughing," Detective Senior Sergeant Cameron Blaine said.

"I'm sure that it has had an impact, but just to see her behaving quite naturally like a 4-year-old girl should do and just enjoying being in the presence of her little sister and her family was good," Blaine added.

Blaine was part of a four-member police team that used a battering ram to smash into a locked house early Wednesday and rescue Cleo. The lights were on and she was alone playing with toys in a house less than a 10-minute drive from her own, police said.

"My name is Cleo," the smiling girl told the police officers who rescued her and asked her name as confirmation that they had found the right child.

Kelly was arrested in a nearby street at about the same time, police said.

Detective Superintendent Rod Wilde, who heads the police investigation, said specialist child interviewers had traveled to Carnarvon from the state capital Perth, 900 kilometers (560 miles) to the south.

"The main concern around that is Cleo's welfare," Wilde said of the interview.

"We have experienced people that will undertake that and it'll take as long as it takes. We'll sit down with the family and work out the appropriate time," Wilde added.

Police would not comment on whether Cleo was interviewed before Kelly was charged.

Media have reported Kelly raised suspicion among other residents when he was seen buying diapers and was known to have no children, but police have disclosed little information about what made the man a suspect.

"It wasn't a random tip or a clairvoyant or any of the sort of things that you might hear," Police Minister Paul Papalia said. "It was just a hard police grind."

Kelly was taken from police detention to a hospital late Wednesday and again on Thursday, with what media reported were self-inflicted injuries.

Asked about reports Kelly was injured after banging his head against a cell wall, Western Australia Police Deputy Commissioner Col Blanch only replied that there were "no serious injuries."

A police statement said Kelly's "medical matter does not relate to any police involvement with him."

Wilde said Kelly had since returned to the police station and was "speaking to officers."

Wednesday was the first full night Cleo spent at home with her mother, Ellie Smith, stepdad Jake Gliddon and her baby half-sister Isla Gliddon since the family's ordeal began.

As they slept, public buildings in Perth were illuminated with blue lights to celebrate the success of the police investigation. In Carnarvon, balloons were raised on buildings and signs were posted welcoming Cleo home.

Western Australia Premier Mark McGowan also visited the family on Thursday and commented on how “well-adjusted” the child and her parents seemed.

“She’s bubbly, playing, friendly, sweet. She was eating an icy pole, she spilt it every way. She told me it was very, very sticky, which I believed, and she was just delightful,” McGowan said.

McGowan said he gave her two teddy bears dressed in police uniforms, but she seemed unimpressed with his suggestion that she name them Cameron and Rod after the senior detectives leading her investigation.

Blaine, a homicide investigator, said he was uncertain whether Cleo recognized him from their first meeting when they met again on Thursday. He described his reaction to finding Cleo alive as “shock, followed by elation.”

“We’d always hoped for that outcome, but were still not prepared for it,” Blaine said.

Xanthe Mallett, a criminologist at Australia’s Newcastle University, said finding a victim of stranger abduction alive after more than two weeks was rare.

“Sadly, they’re normally killed quickly, usually during the first three hours,” Mallett said.

The Carnarvon community’s willingness to help police find Cleo was likely a key factor in the investigation’s success, she said. Police had offered a 1 million Australian dollar (\$743,000) reward for information, but don’t expect the money will be claimed.

“I always thought that this was going to be somebody with local connections because it was somebody who knew that campsite, so the fact that she was so close to that campsite and so close to Cleo’s home wasn’t a surprise to me,” Mallett said.

Police “engaged so well with that community and had them on board, they had the whole community’s eyes on everyone, reporting anyone suspicious. I think that was really key in this investigation — just great, old-fashioned, boots-on-the-ground police work,” Mallett added.

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